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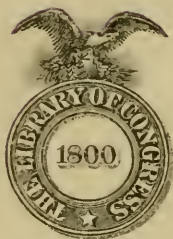
1842d



Mann, Horace:-

An oration delivered before
the authorities of the city of
Boston, July 4, 1842.





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Book B 74

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AN

ORATION,

DELIVERED

BEFORE THE AUTHORITIES

OF THE

CITY OF BOSTON,

JULY 4, 1842.

BY HORACE MANN,

SECRETARY OF THE MASSACHUSETTS BOARD OF EDUCATION.

FIFTH EDITION.

FELLOW-CITIZENS,—It is meet that we should assemble to mingle our congratulations in public, on the recurrence of this Anniversary. The celebration of festival days in honor of illustrious progenitors is a universal fact in human history. It therefore proves the existence of a universal sentiment in human nature, which finds its appropriate utterance in such commemorations. This is a sentiment of gratitude and reverence towards the great and good; and it is honorable both to author and object. Under the impulse of these feelings, the heroes of ancient times were deified by their descendants. To consecrate their memory, sculpture reared statues and shrines. Architecture built monuments and temples. Poetry hymned their praises. Eloquence and its responsive acclamations made the arches of heaven resound with their fame; and even the sober muse of history, dazzled by the brilliancy of their exploits, exaggerated fact into fiction, until the true was lost in the fabulons.

In our day, this sentiment is modified but not extinguished. All modern nations celebrate the anniversary of those days, when their annals were illuminated, or their perilled fortunes rescued, by some grand historic achievement.

The universality and unbroken continuity of these observances seem prophetic of their continuance.

But it is especially worthy of remark, that these public and joyous tributes are paid only to propitious events, or magnanimous deeds,—to what is grand in conception, or glorious in achievement. No days are set apart to commemorate national disaster or ignominy for its own sake. The good only is celebrated. The base, the cowardly, whether in motive or in action, is consigned, through silence, to oblivion.

What a lesson is here, were we so teachable as to learn it! How soon will our position be changed from that of posterity to ancestors; and the strict rules by which we honor or despise predecessors, be applied to us by impartial descendants. Whatever of true, generous, or morally heroic, is wrought out by us, shall be gratefully embalmed in the memories of men; and around millions of firesides, many millions of hearts shall leap with joy at its oft-recurring narration. But what is sordid, perfidious,—a perversion of public good to private ends,—shall be scoffed and hissed at; and its happiest fate shall be an early forgetfulness.

It is, indeed, an impressive thought,—one full of the deepest significancy,—that throughout this vast country, over all its degrees of latitude and longitude, and on the seas which bind the globe in their azure and glorious cincture,—soon as the beams of this morning's sun gilded spire or mast-head, the shout of exultation and

the peal of artillery arose, and sweeping onward and westward like the tidal wave, they are now circuiting the globe, in honor of those heroes and martyrs who, only sixty-six years ago, pledged "fortune, life, and sacred honor" to establish the Independence of these United States." How many times has this story been rehearsed, and yet to the patriot's ear, it never grows old. How curiously has the history of that great revolutionary epoch been investigated; and even now, if some minute of a council,—whether of war or of state,—held at midnight; some memorandum of an order given at a critical juncture; or some hitherto elusive letter, can be found among the records of our government, or pursued across the ocean and drawn from its lurking-place in British or French archives, it is published, read and reiterated by all, and the original is prized, almost like the relic of a saint among the faithful. And all those doings and achievements were less than seventy years ago,—less than the period allotted by the Psalmist to the life of man. Nay, some of the actors in those scenes are amongst us still; and we have proof of the reality not from their lips merely, but honorable scars are their credentials—the hieroglyphs wherein the sacred history is chronicled. Not only have we the mausoleums of battlefields, but every church-yard in New England is thickly strown with the graves of the heroic dead, whose simple inscriptions,—nobler than armorial bearings,—proclaim that they sought toil as a pleasure and rejoiced in self-sacrifice, that they might do good to us, whom they saw only with the eye of faith.

And yet, let me again say, how obvious it is that we stand in the same relation to posterity that our ancestors do to us. And, as we boldly summon our forefathers to our tribunal for adjudication upon their conduct, so will our conduct be brought into judgment by our successors. Each generation has duties of its own to perform; and our duties, though widely different from theirs, are not less important in their character, or less binding in their obligations. It was their duty to found or establish our institutions, and nobly did they perform it. It is our duty to perfect and perpetuate these institutions; and the most solemn question which can be propounded to this age, is, are we performing it nobly? Shall posterity look back upon our present rulers, as we look back upon Arnold, or as we look back upon Washington? Shall posterity look back upon us, as we look back upon the recreants who sought to make Washington Dictator, and would have turned those arms against their country, which had been put into their hands to save her? or shall posterity look back upon us with the heart-throbbings, the tears and passionate admiration, with which we regard the Saviour-like martyrs who, for our welfare, in lonely dungeons and prison-ships, breathing a noisome atmosphere,—their powerful and robust frames protracting their tortures beyond the common endurance of nature, until they slowly but literally perished by starvation,—and when the minions of power came round, day after day, and offered them life and freedom and a glad return to the upper air, if they would desert their country's cause—refused, and died?

I have said that it is our especial and appropriate duty to perfect and perpetuate the institutions we have received. I am aware that this has been said for the last fifty years, thousands of times every year. I do not reiterate the sentiment, therefore, for its originality; nor even for its importance; but for the sake of inquiring, in what manner this work is to be done? It has long seemed to me that it would be more honorable to our ancestors, to praise them, in words, less; but in deeds, to imitate them more. If from their realms of blessedness, they could address us, would they not say? "Prove the sincerity of your words, by imitating the examples you profess to admire. The inheritance we left you is worthless, unless you have inherited the spirit also by which it was acquired. The boon we would bequeath to the latest posterity, can never reach and bless them, save through your hands. In these spiritual abodes, whence all disturbing passions are excluded, where all illusions are purged from our eyes, we can neither be beguiled nor flattered by lip-service. *Deeds* are the only language we understand; and one act of self-sacrifice for the welfare of mankind is more acceptable to us than if you should make every mountain and hill-top a temple to hallow our names, and gather thither the whole generation as worshippers."

Such is the spirit in which I believe our sainted fathers would admonish us.

But, alas for the holiday patriot ! it is so much easier to praise and get up jubilees than it is *to work* ;—it is so much pleasanter to encore a song, than to enlist for a campaign with its privations and diseases and death ;—this in-door declamation and psalm-singing so much better befit the nice and dainty sentimentalist, than to go forth into the conflict, and year after year, to wrestle with difficulties, as with an angel of God, until Heaven yields to the importunity of our struggles what it denied to the formality of our prayers !—all this poetic contemplation of duty is so much easier and cheaper than its stern performance, that we are in perpetual danger of degenerating from effort and self-sacrifice into ceremony and cant.

Were a stranger to come amongst us, and to hear our National Songs, our Fourth of July Orations, and Caucus Speeches, he would say, “ Verily, there never were such patriots as these since the days of Thermopylæ.” But were he to remain with us, and become familiar with the spirit of ambition and self-seeking that afflicts us, if he thought any more of Thermopylæ, it would be, not of the Spartans, but of Xerxes and his plundering invaders.

Fellow-Citizens, we have sterner duties to perform than to assemble here annually, to listen to glorifications of our great country and our great people, of our super-Ciceronian and super-Demosthenean orators, and to praise poetry and art and genius that are to be, *at sometime* ; and then, after refreshing ourselves with feast and jovial song, to close the day with some gairish show, and forthwith to vote ourselves upon the pension list, for the residue of the year, in consideration of such meritorious services. The quiet seat of an honorary member in our community, is not so easily won. Trusts, responsibilities, interests, vaster in amount, more sacred in character, than ever before in the providence of God were committed to any people, have been committed to us. The great experiment of Republicanism,—of the capacity of man for self-government,—is to be tried anew, which wherever it has been tried,—in Greece, in Rome, in Italy,—has failed, through an incapacity in the people to enjoy liberty without abusing it. Another trial is to be made, whether mankind will enjoy more and suffer less, under the ambition and rapacity of an irresponsible parliament, or of irresponsible parties ;—under an hereditary sovereign who must, at least, prove his right to destroy, by showing his birth, or under mobs, which are like wild beasts, that prove their right to devour by showing their teeth. A vacant continent is here to be filled up with innumerable millions of human beings, who may be happy through our wisdom, but must be miserable through our folly. Religion,—the ark of God,—which, of old times, was closed that it might not be profaned,—is here thrown open to all, whether Christian, Jew, or Pagan ; and yet is to be guarded from desecration and sacrilege, lest we perish with a deeper perdition than ever befel any other people.

These are some of the interests committed to our keeping ;—these are some of the duties we have to discharge. These duties, too, are to be discharged by a people, who are liable to alienation from each other by all those natural jealousies which spring from sectional interests, from discordant local institutions, from differences in climate, language, and ancestry. We are exposed to the jealousies which bad men—or which good men, whose knowledge is disproportioned to their zeal, may engender amongst us. And, on many questions of equal delicacy and magnitude, are we not already armed and marshalled against each other, rather than allied and sworn for common protection ?

In this exigency, I affirm that we need far more of wisdom and rectitude than we possess. Preparations for our present condition have been so long neglected that we now have a double duty to perform. We have not only to propitiate to our aid a host of good spirits, but we have to exorcise a host of evil ones. Every aspect of our affairs, public and private, demonstrates that we need, for their successful management, a vast accession to the common stock of intelligence and virtue. But intelligence and virtue are the product of cultivation and training. They do not spring up spontaneously. As yet, all Utopias belong to fiction and not to history ; and these fictions have so little verisimilitude, that ages have passed since the last one was written. We need, therefore, unexampled alacrity and energy in the application of all those influences and means, which promise the surest and readiest returns of wisdom and probity, both public and private.

This is my subject on the present occasion ;—a demonstration that our existing means for the promotion of intelligence and virtue are wholly inadequate to the support of a Republican government. If the facts I have to offer should abate something from our national vain-glory and presumption, I hope they may add as much to national prudence and forethought.

The sovereignty of a great nation is surely one of the most precious of earthly trusts. The happiness or misery which a government dispenses, has dimension in two directions,—depth, as well as superficial extent. It not only reaches widely around, amongst contemporaries ; but far downwards amongst posterity. Hence, as the well-being of many generations,—each of these generations consisting of many millions,—depends upon the administration of a government,—there is something sublime and awful in the mere contemplation of the interests committed to rulers ; and we see the reasonableness of the requisition that they should rule in righteousness.

Without going any deeper into the philosophy of the subject than the mere consideration of these two facts,—the progressive increase of the human family, and the stationary size of the planet on which they reside,—that is, the impossibility of our pulling down and building greater, for the race, as we would to meet the wants of an enlarging household ; I think we are authorized to infer that it was the design of God at the creation that men should live together in large companies or communities. As the race multiplies, and the *un-enlargeable* tenement becomes crowded, mankind must obviously live together, either as social beings, or as cannibals,—for mutual improvement, or for mutual sustenance. And though the theory of the latter relation would derive much support from history, yet it seems to me clear that the former is the will of Heaven.

If then, men live together as a people or nation in a social capacity, there must obviously be some exposition or expression of the national will, in a system of laws, more or less definite, for common guidance.

But it would always be impossible that the first Legislature should foresee and provide for all future contingencies ; and hence the necessity of a perpetual succession of Legislatures to supply defects, and to meet emergencies as they arise. But again ; laws are general, while all the cases arising under them are particular ;—and therefore, government must exercise another function,—that of expounding and applying the law. This function is Judicial, and wholly different from the Legislative. The latter declares, generally, what the rule shall be ; the former, specifically, to what cases or circumstances the rule shall be applied. And once more ;—the law, as it comes from the Legislature, and the decision, as it comes from the Court, have no inherent, self-executing power. The parchment on which they are written, would moulder and crumble, and leave no vestige behind, if the government had not also been vested with an Executive power,—the power of execution,—the prerogative of making things *to be*, as the Legislature and the Court have said they ought to be. It is obvious, then, that the simplest government has various attributes ; and if Heaven has ordained the existence of human government, it must also have ordained the existence and exercise of this variety of attributes.

And further, I deem it no unauthorized assumption, to claim as a postulate,—a point to be conceded in the outset,—at least by all who are not atheists,—that, as God is a being of infinite wisdom and goodness, no part of his universe can be successfully administered except it be upon the principles of knowledge and virtue. He could neither have created nor ordained aught in violation of his own nature. He could not have created any race of intellectual and moral beings, standing in such relations to each other, that universal selfishness and false knowledge should result in the public good. And this we may affirm not only of all things which now exist, but of all things which may spring from present existences. For the goodness and wisdom of the Creator are not limited to those things which we see and understand, but they exist every where ;—just as the beautiful rainbow of the summer shower is not confined to the bright arch which gladdens our eyes, but glows wherever sunbeam and rain-drop meet, and only needs an eye *rightly placed*, in order to be seen.

If then God made man a social being, and therefore made it necessary that he should live in a community with his fellows, and that this community should have laws binding them together, as one moral entity; He made it also necessary that these laws should be founded in wisdom and equity, and observed with fidelity; and every departure from these great principles, either in the formation or the observance of the laws, must be followed, inevitably, by a corresponding degree of loss and harm. This is as obvious, as that a machine must be operated according to the principles of its construction. The operator must have so much of the inventor's mind, as to work the machine on the inventor's plan. The application of a divergent force will at least impair its working,—of a counter-force, will destroy it. It is solely through a departure from these principles of wisdom and goodness, that mankind have suffered miseries which history cannot record nor imagination conceive. The civil tyrant has cast nations, as one man, into his fiery alembic, that from the happiness of them all, he might distil one drop to stimulate his foulest appetites; and the ecclesiastical tyrant, not content with robbing mankind of the precious blessings and joys of religion on earth, has carried his spoliations into eternity. In this western world, a portion of the race have reclaimed their freedom; but this is not a freedom to disobey the laws of our nature, or to exempt ourselves from their penalties when broken. It is simply a freedom to use our own reason in attempting to discover what those laws are, and our own free-will in obeying them; and thus to perform the conditions, under which alone, a rational and free being can fulfil his destiny.

It is impiety towards the memory of our fathers to suppose that they contended merely for the transfer of the source of misgovernment from one side of the Atlantic to the other. If we were to be governed forever by ignorance and profligacy, it mattered little whether that ignorance and profligacy should reside in King George, or in King Numbers,—only as the latter king, being much stronger than the former, and subject to the ferocity without the imbecility of madness, is capable of committing far wider havoc upon human welfare than the former. A voter may go to the polls with as light a feeling of responsibility to God and man, or with passions as vindictive, as ever actuated the British ministry when they passed the Stamp-act, or denounced Adams and Hancock as traitors, and gloated, in imagination, over their quartered bodies. No! Our fathers gave their pledge of "fortune, life and sacred honor," and redeemed it to the letter, that here, on this broad theatre of a continent which spread around them, and with time before them, their descendants might work out that glorious destiny for mankind,—that regeneration, that deliverance from the fetters of iron which had bound the body, and from the fetters of error that had bound the soul,—which the prophets and apostles of liberty, in all ages, had desired to see, but had not seen.

I have said that all governments, even the despotic or autocratic, must exercise three distinct functions, the Legislative, Judicial and Executive; and that, to administer any government, fitly and according to its plan, it requires a certain amount of capacity, and responsibility to right. And no government whatever, —Russia, Turkey, Algiers,—can be so simple as not to include these three attributes, in the last analysis.

But it is most important to observe further, that whatever adds to the complexity of any system of government, increases the difficulties and hazards of administering it, and multiplies and heightens the temptations to abuse. Hence the obvious necessity, with any augmentation of difficulties and dangers, of additional wisdom and rectitude, as guaranties against failure.

To apply this remark: however simple our government may be in theory, it has proved in practice, the most complex government on earth. It is now an historical fact, that more questions for legislative interposition, and for judicial exposition and construction, have arisen under it, during the period of its existence, ten to one, than have arisen, during the same length of time, under any other form of government in Christendom. We are a Union made up of twenty-six States, a nation composed of twenty-six nations; and even beyond the bounds of these, the Federal head is responsible for the fate of several vast territories, and of numerous Indian tribes. Amongst the component States, there is the greatest variety of cus-

tom, institutions and religions. We have the deeper, inbred differences of different ancestry and language; for our people are of the lineage of all nations. Our pursuits for gaining subsistence are various; and such is the diversity of soil and climate, that they must always continue to be so. One portion is agricultural, another commercial, another manufacturing. In one section, the natural productions of the earth, in forests above the surface or in minerals beneath it, are inexhaustibly rich; while of the natural productions of another region, it has been graphically said, that they consist of "granite and ice." This region is the New England El Dorado,—whose "granite and ice," however, are turned into gold, by industry and enterprise. Across the very centre of our territory, a line is drawn, on one side of which all labor is voluntary; while, on the opposite side, the system of involuntary labor, or servitude prevails. This is a fearful element of repugnance,—penetrating not only through all social, commercial and political relations, but into natural ethics and religion.

In addition to the multitude of questions for decision, is the mode of deciding them. This, indeed, is the grand distinctive feature of our government. The questions which arise for decision, are submitted, not to one man, nor to a triumvirate, nor to a Council of Five Hundred, but to millions. The number of votes given at the last presidential election, was nearly two millions and a half. When the appointed day for making the decision arrives, the question must be decided, whether the previous preparation which has been made for it, be much, or little, or none at all. And, what is extraordinary, each voter helps to decide the question as much by not voting as by voting. If the question is so vast or complicated that any one has not time to make up his mind in relation to it; or if any one is too conscientious to act from conjecture, in cases of magnitude, and therefore stays from the polls, another, who has no scruples about acting ignorantly or from caprice or malevolence, votes; and, in the absence of the former, decides the question against the right.

The founders of our government, indeed, intended to increase responsibility, by limiting the number of its depositaries in the last resort. Hence, in framing the Constitution, they gave a two years' tenure of office to the Representatives, one of six years to Senators, and of four years to the President; and in their contemporaneous expositions of that instrument, they declared that the incumbents of these offices, during their official term, should act according to their own best knowledge and ability, irrespective of the vacillations of party, or the gusts of popular clamor. Indeed, so runs the oath of office,—no provision being made,—no saving clause being inserted,—allowing a man to vote any way and all ways, according to any change among his constituents, or the bearing of his vote upon his next election.

But, through the practice of extorting pledges from a candidate before the election; through the doctrine, or right of instruction as it is called, while one continues in office; and emphatically, by the besom of destruction with which a man, who dares to act in accordance with the dictates of his own judgment and conscience, against the will or whim of his constituents, is swept into political annihilation, the theoretical independence of the Representative—Senator—President—is, to a great extent, abrogated. Instead of holding their offices for two, six, and four years, respectively, they are minute-men; and many of them examine each mail to see what their oaths mean, until the arrival of the next.

Even this representation is faint and inadequate. The most conscientious men, in one State or place, are liable to be catechised out of office, or superseded for performing their duty in it, by one party; while, in another State or place, others are subjected to the same fate, for belonging conscientiously, to the opposite party. It actually happened, a few years since, that that great statesman and jurist, Edward Livingston, lost his election to Congress, in New Orleans, because he had honestly espoused one side of an important question; and, at the same election, John Sergeant, of Philadelphia, lost his, because he had honestly espoused the other side;—and so both were excluded from the councils of the nation. Under similar circumstances, it often happens that the places of such men are filled by some

mere negation of a man, or by some political harlequin, who is ready to enter on the stage, in any dress that pit or gallery may call for. Now I would ask any sober and reflecting man, whether he would not prefer to have his own and his country's interests represented on the floor of Congress by individuals such as those above named, though widely differing from him on a particular point, rather than to have them represented by a base party chameleon, who always reflects the political complexion of the district he resides in;—or, outdoing the chameleon himself, changes to the complexion of the district he means to go to?

But it is not the legislative branch only of our government, into which the power of the people directly enters. As jurors, they decide almost all questions of fact in the judicial department. As witnesses, they are the medium for furnishing the facts themselves to which the court applies its law; and here the witness may be said to govern the court; for, accordingly as he testifies to one thing or its opposite, one legal principle or its opposite arises in the judge's mind, and is applied to the case. And again, in the absence of a standing army, the people are the only reliance of the executive power for enforcing either an act of the Legislature or a decree of the Court, which meets resistance.

I might advert to another prominent circumstance, showing the difficulties and dangers that beset our course. Our government, being representative as it regards the people, and federative as it regards the States, is new in the history of the race. It has no precedent on the file of nations. We have no experience of others, derived from similar experiments, to guide us. Hence our only resort is, to see as far as we can, to grope where we cannot see, and to plunge where we cannot grope. But I leave this fact and its natural consequences to be traced out by each one for himself.

If then every government,—even the simplest,—requires talent and probity for its successful administration; and if it demands these qualities in a higher and higher degree, in proportion to its complexity, and its newness; then does our government require this talent and probity, to an extent indefinitely beyond that of any other which ever existed. And if, in all governments, wisdom and goodness in the ruler, are indispensable to the dignity and happiness of the subject; then, in a government like our own, where all are rulers, all must be wise and good, or we must suffer the alternative of debasement and misery. It is not enough that a bare majority should be intelligent and upright, while a large minority is ignorant and corrupt. Even in such a state, we should be a house divided against itself, which, we are taught, cannot stand. Hence knowledge and virtue must penetrate society, through and through. We need general intelligence and integrity as we need our daily bread. A famine in the latter, would not be more fatal to natural health and life, than a dearth in the former to political health and life.

Two dangers then, equally fatal, impend over us;—the danger of ignorance which does not know its duty, and the danger of vice which, knowing, contemns it. To ensure prosperity, the mass of the people must be both well informed, and upright; but it is obvious that one portion of them may be honest but ignorant, while the residue are educated but fraudulent.

When, therefore, we say that our government must be administered by adequate knowledge, and according to the unchangeable principles of rectitude, we mean that it must be administered by men who have acquired this knowledge, and whose conduct is guided by these principles. The knowledge and virtue we need are not abstractions, idealities, bodiless conceptions;—they must be incarnated in human form, embodied in the living head and heart; they must glow with such fervid vitality as to burst forth spontaneously into action. Instead of our talking so much of these qualities, they must be such a matter of course as not to be talked of.

Such must have been the theory of those who achieved our Independence, and framed the organic law of our government. They did not brave the terrors of that doubtful struggle, to escape from a supposed one-headed monster on the other side of the Atlantic, into the jaws of a myriad-headed monster on this side. No! we should rob the patriots of the Revolution of their purest glory, did we not believe

that the means of self-elevation and self-purification, for the whole people, was an infinitely higher object with them, than immunity from pecuniary burdens. Our fathers did not go to the British king, like a town pauper, demanding exemption from taxes; but they went, like high-priests of God, to reclaim the stolen ark of Liberty,—and to bring Dagon upon his face, again and again, till it should be restored.

With the heroes and sages and martyrs of those days, I believe in the capability of man for self-government,—my whole soul thereto most joyously consenting. Nay, if there be any heresy among men, or blasphemy against God, at which the philosopher might be allowed to forget his equanimity, and the Christian his charity,—it is the heresy and the blasphemy of believing and avowing, that the infinitely good and all-wise Author of the universe persists in creating and sustaining a race of beings, who, by a law of their nature, are forever doomed to suffer all the atrocities and agonies of misgovernment, either from the hands of others, or from their own. The doctrine of the inherent and necessary disability of mankind for self-government should be regarded not simply with denial, but with abhorrence;—not with disproof only, but with execration. To sweep so foul a creed from the precincts of truth, and utterly to consume it, rhetoric should become a whirlwind, and logic fire. Indeed, I have never known a man who desired the establishment of monarchical and aristocratical institutions amongst us, who had not a mental reservation, that, in such case, he and his family should belong to the privileged orders.

Still, if asked the broad question, whether man is capable of self-government, I must answer it conditionally. If by man, in the inquiry, is meant the Fejee Islanders; or the convicts at Botany Bay; or the people of Mexico and of some of the South American Republics, (so called;) or those as a class, in our own country, who can neither read nor write; or those who can read and write, and who possess talents and an education by force of which they get treasury, or post office, or bank appointments, and then abscond with all the money they can steal; I answer unhesitatingly that *man*, or rather *such men*, are not fit for self-government. Fatuity and guilt are no more certain to ruin an individual, or a family over which they preside, than they are to destroy a government, into whose rule they enter. Politics have been beautifully defined to be *the art of making a people happy*. Such men have no such art; but, with power in their hands, they would draw down personal, and dispense universal, misery.

But if, on the other hand, the inquiry be, whether mankind are not endowed with those germs of intelligence and those susceptibilities of goodness, by which, under a perfectly practicable system of cultivation and training they are able to avoid the evils of despotism and anarchy; and also, of those frequent changes in national policy which are but one remove from anarchy; and to hold steadfastly on their way in an endless career of improvement,—then, in the full rapture of that joy and triumph which springs from a belief in the goodness of God and the progressive happiness of man, I answer, *they are able*.

But men are not *born* in the full possession of such an ability. They do not necessarily develope any such ability, as they grow up from infancy to manhood. Competency to fill so high a sphere can be acquired only by the cultivation of natural endowments, and the subjugation of inordinate propensities. We laugh to scorn the idea of a man's being *born* a ruler or lawgiver, whether King or Peer; but men are *born* capable of making laws and being rulers, just as much in the Old World as in the New. With us, every voter is a ruler and a law-maker, and therefore it is no less absurd to say, here, that a man is fit to be a voter by right of nativity or naturalization, than it is, in the language of the British constitution, to say, that a man shall be Sovereign, or Lord, by hereditary descent. Qualification, in both cases, is something superadded to birth or citizenship; and hence, unless we take adequate means to supply this qualification to our voters, the Bishop of London or the Duke of Wellington may sneer at us for believing in the hereditary right *to vote*, with as good a grace as we can at them, for believing in the hereditary right *to rule*.

And here a fundamental question arises,—the most important question ever put

in relation to this people,—whether, when our government was changed from the hereditary right to rule, to the hereditary right to vote, any corresponding measures were taken to prevent irresponsible voters from abusing their power, as irresponsible rulers had abused theirs. Government is a stewardship, always held by a comparatively small portion of those whose happiness is dependent upon its acts. Even with us, in States where the right of suffrage is most extensive, far less than a quarter part of the existing population, sway the fortunes of all the rest,—to say nothing of their power over the welfare of posterity. This precious deposit in the hands of the foreign steward had been abused ; we reclaimed it from his possession, and divided it amongst thousands ; but what guaranty did we obtain from the new depositaries, that our treasure should not be squandered or embezzled, as wantonly or wrongfully as before ? It is more difficult to watch the million than the individual. It is a case, too, where the law of bond and suretyship does not apply ; because, when the contract is broken, we have none to apply to for redress save the contractor and surety, who themselves have violated their obligation. There is but one practicable or possible insurance or gage, and that is, the capacity and conscientiousness of the fiduciary.

When the Declaration of Independence was carried into effect, and the Constitution of the United States was adopted, the civil and political relations of the generation then living and of all succeeding ones, were changed. Men were no longer the same men, but were clothed with new rights and responsibilities. Up to that period, so far as government was concerned, they might have been ignorant ; indeed, it has generally been held that where a man's only duty is obedience, it is better that he should be ignorant ; for why should a beast of burden be endowed with the sensibilities of a man ! Up to that period, so far as government was concerned, a man might have been unprincipled and flagitious. He had no access to the statute-book to alter or repeal its provisions, so as to screen his own violations of the moral law from punishment, or to legalize the impoverishment and ruin of his fellow-beings. But with the new institutions, there came new relations, and an immense accession of powers. New trusts of inappreciable value and magnitude were devolved upon the old agents and upon their successors, irrevocably.

Now the rule of common sense applicable to analogous cases, applies emphatically here ;—confide your fortunes only to the hands of a faithful and competent agent, or if, through legal limitation or restriction, they must pass into the hands of one at present unqualified to administer them ; spend half, spend nine-tenths of the fortune itself, if need be, to qualify the new agent for his duty.

If, at the epoch to which I have referred, there was any class of men who believed that republican institutions contain an inherent and indestructible principle of self-preservation, or self-purification,—who believed that a Republic from the necessity of its nature is infallible and incorruptible, and, like a beautiful goddess, endowed with immortal youth and purity ; or, if there is any class of men at the present day holding this faith, let me say it is as fatal an error as was ever harbored by the human mind ; because it belongs to that class of errors which blind while they menace,—whose deadly shaft is unseen until it quivers in the heart. A republican government is the visible manifestation of the people's invisible soul. Through the ballot-box, the latent will bursts out into authoritative action. In a republican government the ballot-box is the urn of fate ; yet no god shakes the bowl or presides over the lot. If the ballot-box is open to wisdom and patriotism and humanity ; it is equally open to ignorance and treachery, to pride and envy, to contempt for the poor or hostility towards the rich. It is the loosest filter ever devised to strain out impurities. It gives equal ingress to whatever comes. No masses of selfishness or fraud, no foul aggregations of cupidity or profligacy, are so ponderous or bulky as to meet obstruction in its capacious gorge. The criteria of a right to vote respect citizenship, age, residence, tax, and, in a few cases, property ; but no inquiry can be put whether the applicant is a Cato or a Catiline. To secure fidelity in the discharge of their duties, an oath is imposed on the most unimportant officers,—constables, clerks, surveyors of roads, of lumber, leather, fish,—while the just exercise of this highest function of the citizen, by which law makers, law expound-

ers, and executive officers are alike created, is secured by no civil sanction. In all business transactions, especially where any doubt or distrust attaches to character, we reduce our stipulations to writing; but in conferring the right to vote, we take no promise beforehand that it shall be honestly exercised, nor do we reserve to ourselves any right of subsequent redress, should the privilege be abused.

In some States, the law provides that the *name* of every voter shall be endorsed upon the ballot he gives. Suppose, in some of our angry political contests, the *motives* of every voter were written upon his ballot, so that they should all be as legible to man, on the paper, as they are visible to God, in the heart,—what a history would they reveal! We are accustomed to quote the abominable edicts of popes and kings, and we dwell upon every line, to kindle abhorrence at human depravity; yet, as an exponent of motives, what is the verbiage of papal bulls or imperial mandates, compared with the sententious decrees which every man's ballot contains, and which go forth omnipotent to execute his will. Yet this irresponsible utterance through the ballot-box, is the inceptive process of legislation; nay, in all the most important cases, it is legislation,—the will of the people being made known here, and only passing on to legislative halls to go through certain formalities and be promulgated as law. The human imagination can picture no semblance of the destructive potency of the ballot-box in the hands of an ignorant and a corrupt people. The Roman cohorts were terrible; the Turkish Janizaries were incarnate fiends; but each was powerless as a child, for harm, compared with universal suffrage, without mental illumination and moral principle. The power of casting a vote is far more formidable than that of casting spear or javelin.

One of the foulest in the long catalogue of atrocities which necessitated the French Revolution, was the emission of *lettres de cachet*,—those secret, royal orders, by which good men, without trial and without accusation, were snatched, at midnight, from home and from all they held dear, their property confiscated, and themselves imprisoned or assassinated. Yet every vote which a bad man gives, is a secret, royal *lettre de cachet*, against the happiness and hopes of all good men,—and given equally without trial, arraignment, or accusation. The right of secret ballot is a general license to every bad man in the community, to do, on certain days, the vilest deeds he can conceive, with perfect impunity. With such, election days are the Saturnalia of all vicious desires. But evil motives will issue in evil deeds; and the deeds will be disarmed of none of their malignity because they are done in secret.

On one of those oft-recurring days, when the fate of the State or the Union is to be decided at the polls; when, over all the land, the votes are falling thick as hail, and we seem to hear them rattle like the clangor of arms; is it not enough to make the lover of his country turn pale, to reflect upon the motives under which they may be given, and the consequences to which they may lead? By the votes of a few wicked men, or even of one wicked man, honorable men may be hurled from office, and miscreants elevated to their places; useful offices abolished, and sinecures created; the public wealth, which had supported industry, squandered upon mercenaries; enterprise crippled, the hammer falling from every hand, the wheel stopping in every mill, the sail dropping to the mast on every sea,—and thus capital which had been honestly and laboriously accumulated, turned into dross; in fine, the whole policy of the government may be reversed, and the social condition of millions changed, to gratify one man's grudge, or prejudice, or revenge. In a word, if the votes, which fall so copiously into the ballot-box, on our days of election, emanate from wise counsels and a loyalty to truth, they will descend, like benedictions from Heaven, to bless the land and fill it with song and gladness,—such as have never been known upon earth since the days of Paradise; but if, on the other hand, these votes come from ignorance and crime, the fire and brimstone that were rained on Sodom and Gomorrah would be more tolerable.

So if, at the time when that almost anarchical state of things which immediately followed the Revolutionary War, subsided and took shape and character in the Republican form of our National and State constitutions;—if, at that time, there was a large class of men more wealthy and better educated than the mass,—pos-

sessing more of the adventitious distinctions of society, and conversant with an ampler range of human history,—and hence drawing auguries unfavorable to themselves and to the community, from the copious infusion of the democratic principle into all our institutions;—that class of men had one of the most solemn duties to perform ever imposed upon human beings. If they had a superior knowledge of the past, and a greater stake in the future, it was alike their duty and their interest, to stifle all considerations of person and caste, to reconcile themselves to their new condition, and to concentrate all their energies in providing some refuge from impending evils. With our change from a monarchical to a popular government,—from a government where all rule descended from “our Lord the King,” to one where all rule ascended from “our Lords the People,” the whole condition and relations of men were changed. It was like a change in the order of Nature. Were the poles of the earth to be now swung round, ninety degrees,—to a coincidence with the equator,—it would not work a greater change in the soil and climate of all the zones, than was wrought by that change of government, both in the relative and absolute conditions of men. Before this epoch, the few, by force of rank, wealth, dress, equipage, accomplishments, governed the many; after it, the many were to govern the few. Before this, birth and family were words of potent signification; but the revolution worked the most thorough attainder of all such blood; and it would have been better for a man to put on the poisoned tunic of Nessus, than to boast that a drop of aristocratical blood coursed through his veins. Before this, the deference paid to the opinions of different men, varied in the ratio of thousands to one; but after this, the vote of the veriest ignoramus or scoundrel would balance that of Franklin or Washington.

About the expediency, and especially about the *extent* of that change, a wide difference of opinion prevailed. But, the change being made, was it not the duty of its opponents to yield to the inevitable course of events, and to prepare for coming exigencies? And could not every really noble soul find an ample compensation for the loss of personal influence or family distinction, in the greater dignity and elevation of his fellow beings? From whom should instruction come, if not from the most educated? Where should generosity towards the poor begin, if not with those whom Providence had blessed with abundance? Whence should magnanimity proceed, if not from minds expanded by culture? If there were an order of men who lost something of patrician rank by this political change, instead of holding themselves aloof from the people, they should have walked among them as Plato and Socrates did among their contemporaries, and expounded to them the nature and the vastness of the work they had undertaken to do;—nay, if need were, they should have drained the poisoned bowl to sanctify the truths which they taught. For want of that interest and sympathy in the condition of the poor and the ignorant which the new circumstances required, they and their descendants have been, and will be compelled to drink potions, more bitter than hemlock, as their daily beverage. Interest, honor, duty, alike required that no word of aspersion or contumely should be cast upon the new order of things or its supporters. Why should they laugh at the helmsman, when the ship which contained their own treasures as well as his, was in the furrows of the sea? If, as was contemptuously said by one of the most gifted men of that party, these republican institutions are “like white birch stakes whose nature it is to fail in two years;” and that “a republic wears out its morals almost as soon as the sap of a white birch rots the wood,”—they should forthwith have saturated them with such a preparation of virtue and knowledge as would *kyanize** even the porous structure of birch itself, and keep the dry-rot forever from its spongiest fibres. With the change in the organic structure of our government, there should have been corresponding changes in all public measures, and institutions. For every dollar given by the wealthy, or by the State, to colleges, to cultivate the higher branches of knowledge, a hundred should have been given for primary education. For every acre of land bestowed upon an academy, a province should have been granted to Common Schools. Select schools for select children should have been discarded; and

* “*Kyanizing*” is a chemical process, by which wood is supposed to be rendered indestructible.

universal education joined hands with universal suffrage. It was no time for "Old Mortality" to be furbishing up the gravestones of the dead, when house, and household, and posterity were all in peril from the living. Instead of the old order of nobility, with its baubles and puerilities, a new order should have been created,—an order of Teachers, wise, benevolent, filled with Christian enthusiasm, and rewarded and honored by all;—an order looking forward to a noble line of benefactors whom they might help to rear, rather than backwards to ancestors from whom they had basely degenerated. In these schools, the first great principle of a republican government,—that of native, inborn equality, should have been practically inculcated, by their being open to all, good enough for all, and attended by all. Here too, the second great principle of a republican government should have been taught,—that all men, though natively equal, become inherently unequal the moment that one grows wiser or better than his fellow. The doctrine of "higher" and "lower" classes in society should have been retained, but with a change in its application. Those who had done the most good to mankind should have been honored as the "highest;" while those who had done no good to the race, either by the labors of the hand or by the labors of the mind,—who had lived, without requital, upon the earnings of others, and left the world no better or made it worse, than they found it, should have been thrust down in the scale of social consideration, to "low" and "lower," through all the degrees of comparison. Whatever of leisure or of knowledge was possessed by the more wealthy or educated, should have been freely expended to enlighten the laboring classes. Lectures, libraries, lyceums, mechanics' institutes, should every where have been fostered; scientific tracts gratuitously distributed; and a drowning child should not have been snatched from a watery grave with more promptness and alacrity than an ignorant or an abandoned one should have been sought out, and brought under elevating and reforming influences. The noblest public edifices, the most splendid galleries of art, theatres, gardens, monuments, should all have been deemed a reproach to any people, while there was a child amongst them without ample and improved means of education. The nature and functions of our government, the laws of political economy, the *duties* as well as the *rights* of citizens, should have been made familiar as household words. The right to vote should have been held up as the most sacred of human rights, as involving all civil and religious rights, and therefore to be constrained, (*coactum*, as the Romans would have more vigorously expressed it,) by all civil and religious obligations. The great truth should every where have been inculcated, by example as well as by precept, that for the dependant to vote from malice, or envy, or wantonness, involves substantially the moral guilt of treason; and for the superior to compel the dependant, through fear or bribery, to vote against his judgment, involves the baseness as well as the guilt of subornation of treason. Had this been done, our days of election would never have been, as they now so often are, days of turbulence, and bacchanailan riot, of insulting triumph or revengeful defeat; but they would have been days of thoughtfulness and of solemnity, such as befit a day whose setting sun will witness the ruin or the rescue of so much of human welfare.

Had this been done, our pioneer settlers would not have abandoned their homes, for the western wilderness, until they could have carried all the blessed influences,—the power and the spirit of education, with them. No prospect of wealth would have tempted them to leave a land of moral culture for a moral desert. Then our civilization, as it expanded, would have been laden with blessings. We might, indeed, have subjugated less territory by the arts of industry and enterprise; but as a thousand-fold requital for this, we should have subjugated fewer aborigines by fraud and violence. Instead of the unenviable power which belongs to the sword, we should have enjoyed the godlike power which resides in beneficence.

And until all this work of improvement is done,—until this indifference of the wealthy and the educated towards the masses shall cease, and legislative bounty shall atone for past penuriousness, there can be no security for any class or description of men, nor for any interest, human or divine. With additional thousands of voters, every year crossing the line of manhood to decree the destiny of the nation,

without additional knowledge and morality, things must accelerate from worse to worse. Amid increasing darkness and degeneracy, every man's rights may be invaded through legislation,—through the annulment of charters or the abrogation of remedies ;—and through the corruption of jurors, or even of one juror on the panel of twelve, every man's right of redress may be denied for the grossest aggressions. As parties alternate, the rich may now be plundered of a life of gains ; and now, through vindictive legislation, the arms of the laboring man struck dead by his side. And if, amid these scenes, even Washington should arise, and from the battlements of the capitol, should utter a warning voice, the mad populace would hurl him from the Tarpeian. In fine, in our government, as at present administered, or as likely to be administered, the power, even after a choice of rulers, is so far retained by the people as almost to supersede the reality of representation ; and, therefore, if the whole people be not equal to the business entrusted to them,—the mass, like any individual, will assuredly ruin what they do not understand.

I have said that schools should have been established for the education of the whole people. These schools should have been of a more perfect character than any which have ever yet existed. In them the principles of morality should have been copiously intermingled with the principles of science. Cases of conscience should have alternated with lessons in the rudiments. The multiplication table should not have been more familiar nor more frequently applied, than the rule, to do to others as we would that they should do unto us. The lives of great and good men should have been held up for admiration and example ; and especially the life and character of Jesus Christ, as the sublimest pattern of benevolence, of purity, of self-sacrifice, ever exhibited to mortals. In every course of studies, all the practical and preceptive parts of the Gospel should have been sacredly included ; and all dogmatical theology and sectarianism sacredly excluded. In no school should the Bible have been opened to reveal the sword of the polemic, but to unloose the dove of peace.

I have thus endeavored to show, that with universal suffrage, there must be universal elevation of character, intellectual and moral, or there will be universal mismanagement and calamity.

Let us now, in the first place, inquire whether there is at present, in this country, a degree of intelligence sufficient for the wise administration of its affairs. If there is sufficient intelligence in the aggregate people, then there must be sufficient in the individual members ; and, if there is not sufficient in the individual members, then there is not sufficient in the aggregate.

The last census of the United States shows the round number of five hundred and fifty thousand persons, over the age of twenty years, unable to read and write. From no inconsiderable attention devoted to this and kindred topics, I am convinced that the above number, great as it is, is far below the truth. I will state one or two of the reasons, among many, which have led me to this conclusion.

There is no part of our country where a man would not prefer to be accounted able to read and write, rather than to be written down according to the preference of Dogberry. To be supposed the possessor of power and accomplishments is a desire common to all men, whether savage, or civilized, or in the intermediate state. The deputy marshals or assistants who took the census travelled from house to house, making the shortest practicable stay at each. They received compensation, by the head, not by the day, for the work done. Considering the time to which they were limited, more was required of them than could be thoroughly and accurately performed. The most credible sources of information would be the heads of families ; but as these might not always be at home, they were allowed to receive statements from persons over sixteen years of age. It must often have happened that the import of the questions proposed by them was not fully understood. Their informants were subjected to no test,—their bare word being accredited. The very question would imply disparagement, and would often be regarded as an insult, by those who saw no reason for putting it. A new source of error would exist in any want of fidelity in the agent ; and who can suppose,

among so many, that all were faithful? It is well known too, that no inconsiderable number of persons gave false information when inquired of by the deputies,—either through a wanton or mischievous disposition, or through a fear that the census was only a preliminary step to some tax or other requisition, to be made upon them by the government.

Let me fortify this reasoning with facts. In the annual message of Governor Campbell of Virginia, to the Legislature of that State, dated January 9th, 1839,—the year immediately preceding that in which the census was taken,—I find the following statement:—

“The importance of an efficient system of education, embracing in its comprehensive and benevolent design, the whole people, cannot be too frequently recurring to.

“The statements furnished by the clerks of five city and borough courts, and ninety-three of the county courts, in reply to the inquiries addressed to them, ascertain, that of those who applied for marriage licenses, a large number were unable to write their names. The years selected for this inquiry were those of 1817, 1827, and 1837. The statements show that the applicants for marriage licenses in 1817, amounted to four thousand six hundred and eighty-two; of whom eleven hundred and twenty-seven were unable to write;—five thousand and forty-eight in 1827, of whom the number unable to write was eleven hundred and sixty-six;—and in 1837, the applicants were four thousand six hundred and fourteen; and of these the number of one thousand and forty-seven were unable to write their names. From which it appears, there still exists a deplorable extent of ignorance, and that in truth, it is hardly less than it was twenty years ago, when the school fund was created. The statements, it will be remembered are partial, not embracing quite all the counties, and are moreover confined to one sex. The education of females, it is to be feared, is in a condition of much greater neglect.

“There are now in the State two hundred thousand children between the ages of five and fifteen. Forty thousand of them are reported to be poor children; and of them only one half to be attending schools. It may be safely assumed that of those possessing property, adequate to the expenses of a plain education, a large number are growing up in ignorance, for want of schools within convenient distances. Of those at school, many derive little or no instruction, owing to the incapacity of the teachers, as well as to their culpable negligence and inattention. Thus the number likely to remain uneducated and to grow up, without just perceptions of their duties, religious, social, and political, is really of appalling magnitude, and such as to appeal with affecting earnestness to a parental Legislature.”

Here let the audience mark particulars. Written application was to be made for a marriage license. The rudimental or elementary education which a person obtains, usually precedes marriage. After this clinacteric, people rarely go to school to learn reading and writing. The information, here given, was obtained from five city and borough, as well as from ninety-three county courts, (the whole number of counties in the State being one hundred and twenty-three;—not, therefore, in the dark interior only, but in the blaze of city illumination. The fact was communicated by the governor of a proud State to the Legislature of the same. Each case was subjected to an infallible test, for no man who could make any scrawl in the similitude of his name, would prefer to make his mark and leave it on record. The requisition was made upon the officers of the courts, and the evidence was of a documentary or judicial character,—the highest known to the law. And what was the result? Almost one quarter part of the men applying for marriage licenses were unable to write their names! It would be preposterous to suppose that their intended wives had gazed, from any nearer point than their husbands, at the splendors of science. Indeed, Governor Campbell clearly intimates an opinion that the women were far more ignorant than the men.

I ought to add, that an inquiry made in another part of the same State, by one of its public officers, showed that one-third of all those who had applied for a marriage license had made their marks.

Now Virginia has a free white population over 20 years of age, of 329,959. One fourth part of this number is 82,489, which, according to the evidence presented by Governor Campbell, is the lowest possible limit, at which the minimum of adults unable to read and write, can be stated. But the census number is 53,787 only, making a difference of 23,702, or more than 40 per cent. North Carolina, with a free white population over 20 years of age of only 209,635, has the appalling number, even according to the census, of 56,609 unable to read and write; or a great deal more than one quarter part of the whole free population, over 20 years of age, *below zero*, in the educational scale. If to this number we should add 40 per cent. as facts require us to do in the case of Virginia, we should find almost two-fifths of the whole adult population of that State in the same Cimmerian night.

I had proposed to pursue this computation in regard to Kentucky, Tennessee, South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, &c., but the task is useless and sickening. It must suffice to state, in general terms, that the number according to the census, of persons over the age of 20, unable to read and write, is, in Virginia, 58,787, in North Carolina, 56,609, Kentucky, 40,010, Tennessee, 58,531, South Carolina, 20,615, (with a free white population over 20 years of age, of only 111,663, and with 327,038 slaves,) Georgia, 30,717, and Alabama, 22,592; and that, by the Constitution of the United States, these ignorant multitudes have the right of voting for Representatives in Congress, not only for themselves, but for their slaves,—five slaves being counted as equal to three whites. Now, if to the 550,000 free white population, over the age of 20 years, unable to read and write, as shown by the census, we should add only thirty per cent, for its undoubted under-estimates, it would increase the total to more than 700,000.

I might derive another and a convincing argument, from the statistics of education given by the census, in regard to our own State, to prove their inaccuracy. The same general motives, which would lead to an under-statement in regard to the number of persons unable to read and write, would lead to an over-statement in regard to the number of those attending school. In Massachusetts, the whole number of scholars of all ages, in all our Public Schools, is annually returned by the school committees,—men highly competent to do their duty, familiar with the subject, and possessing the most ample and exact means of information. By those returns, it appears that the whole number of scholars who were in all our Public Schools, any part of the time during our school year 1840–41, (the year in which the census was taken,) was but 155,041, and the average attendance was, in winter 116,398, and in summer, 96,802;—while the number given in the census, is 158,351.

But without seeking any closer approximation to so unwelcome a truth, let us suppose, that we have but 700,000 free white persons in the United States, over the age of twenty years, unable to read and write; and further, that only one quarter part of these are voters,—that is, we will deduct one half for females, and allow one half of the male moiety to be persons, either between twenty and twenty-one, or unnaturalized, (which, considering the States where the great mass of this ignorance belongs, is a most liberal allowance, because the number of ignorant immigrants is much less at the South than at the North) and we should then have 175,000 voters, unable to read and write.

Now at the last presidential election, when every voter not absolutely in his winding sheet was carried to the polls,—when the harvest-field was so thoroughly swept that neither stubble nor tares were left for the gleaner,—at that election, the majority for the successful candidate was 146,081,—about 30,000 less than the estimated number of legal voters in the United States, unable to read and write. At this election it is also to be remembered, a larger majority of the electoral votes was given to the successful candidate than was ever given to any other President of the United States, with the single exception of Mr. Monroe in 1820, against whom there was but one vote. Gen. Harrison's popular majority also, was undoubtedly the largest by which any President of the United States has ever been elected, with the exception above mentioned, of Mr. Monroe, and perhaps that of General Washington, at his second election. And yet this majority, large as it was, was about 30,000 less than the estimated number of our legal voters, unable to read and write.

No, Fellow-Citizens, we have not for years past, and we shall not have, at least for many years to come, an election of a President, or a Congress, or a Governor of a State,—chosen under written constitutions, and to legislate and act under written constitutions, whose choice will not be dependent upon, and determinable by, legal voters, unable to read and write,—voters who do not know, and cannot know, whether they vote for King Log, or King Stork. The illustrious and noble band who framed the Constitution of the Union,—Washington, Adams, Franklin, Jefferson, Madison,—who adjusted all the principles which it contains, by the line and the plummet, and weighed the words which describe them in scales

so nice as to tremble beneath the dust of the balance,—expended the energies of their mighty minds to perfect an instrument, which, before half a century should pass away, was doomed to be administered, controlled, expounded, by men unable to read and write. The power of Congress over all the great social and economical interests of this vast country; the orbits in which the States are to move around the central body in the system; the functions of the Executive, who holds in his hands the army and the navy, manages all diplomatic relations with foreign powers, and can involve the country, at any time, in the horrors of war; and that grand poising power, the Supreme Judiciary, appointed to be the presiding intelligence over the system, to harmonize its motions and to hold its attracting and divergent tendencies in equilibrium;—all this splendid structure, the vastest and the nicest ever devised by mortals,—is under the control of men who are incapable of reading one word of the language which describes its frame-work, and defines its objects and its guards,—incapable of reading one word of contemporaneous exposition, of antecedent history, or of subsequent developments, and therefore ready to make it include anything, or exclude anything, as their blind passions may dictate. Phaeton was less a fool when he mounted the chariot to drive the horses of the sun, than ourselves, if we expect to reach the zenith of prosperity and happiness under such guidance!

I have spoken of those only who might as well have lived before Cadmus invented letters, as in the middle of this nineteenth century. But it is to be remembered there is no unoccupied space,—no broad line of demarcation between the totally ignorant and the competently learned. Between meridian and midnight, a dim and long twilight intervenes.

If the seven hundred thousand, who, in one particular, surpass the most learned of ancient or modern times,—because to them all written languages are alike,—if these are the most numerous class,—probably the next most numerous consists of those who know next to nothing,—and in reaching the summit of the highest intelligence, we should ascend by very easy gradations. Very many people learn to write their names for business purposes, whose attainments, at that point, become stationary; and it is one thing to be just able to read a verse in the Bible, and quite another to understand the forty thousand words in common use, among intelligent men;—there being more than a geometrical increase in the ideas which these words may be made to convey. Nay, if a few of the words, used by an intelligent man, are lost to the hearer, through his ignorance of their meaning, the whole drift and object of the speaking or writing are lost. The custom so prevalent at the West and South, of *stump-speaking*, as it is significantly but uncouthly called, had its origin in the voters' incapacity to read. How otherwise can a candidate for office communicate with ignorant voters? Should he publish his views and send them abroad, he must send an interpreter with them; but at a *barbecue*,—amidst the sympathy of numbers, the excitement of visible objects, the feast, the flow, the roar,—the most abstruse points of the Constitution, the profoundest questions of national policy can all be expounded, and men and measures decided upon, to universal satisfaction!

A clear corollary is deducible from this demonstration. If the majority of a self-governing people are sober-minded, enlightened, studious of right, capable of comparing and balancing opposite interpretations of a fundamental law, or opposite views of a particular system of policy; then all appeals addressed to them in messages, speeches, pamphlets, and from the thousand-tongued newspaper press, will be calm, dispassionate, adapted at once to elucidate the subject under consideration, and to instruct and elevate the mind of the arbiters. But, on the other hand, if the people are ignorant, fickle, averse to, or incapable of, patient inquiry, prone to hasty decisions from plausible appearances, or reckless from prejudice or passion, then the demagogues who address, will adapt themselves to the dupes who hear, just as certainly, as the hunter adapts his lure to the animal he would ensnare; and flattery, imposture, falsehood, the vindication and eulogy of fellow-partisans, however wicked, and the defamation of opponents, however virtuous, will be the instruments by which a warfare, destructive in the end alike to victors and

vanquished, will be waged. Let the spirit and tone of our congressional and legislative speech-makers, and the language of the political press, throughout the country, decide the question, which of the above described classes they consider themselves as addressing.

Some have thought that, in a Republic, the good and wise must necessarily maintain an ascendancy over the vicious and ignorant. But whence any such moral necessity? The distinctive characteristic of a Republic is, the greater freedom and power of its members. A Republic is a political contrivance by which the popular voice is collected and uttered, as one articulate and authoritative sound. If then, the people are unrighteous, that utterance will be unrighteous. If the people, or a majority of them withdraw their eyes from wisdom and equity,—those everlasting lights in the firmament of truth; if they abandon themselves to party strife, where the triumph of a faction, rather than the prevalence of the right, is made the object of contest,—it becomes as certain as are the laws of omnipotence, that such a community will express and obey the baser will.

Suppose a people to be honest, but unenlightened either by study or experience; and suppose a series of questions to be submitted to them for decision, more grave and important than were ever before evolved in the history of the race. Suppose further, that many of the leading men among them, and the principal organs which hold communication with them, instead of striving to enlighten and instruct, only inflame and exasperate one portion of them against another portion,—and in this state of mind they proceed to the arbitrament. Would it not be better, like the old Roman soothsayers, to determine the question by the flight of birds, or to learn the oracles of fate by inspecting the entrails of an animal?

When a pecuniary question, however trifling, is to be submitted to a bench of judges, composed of the most learned men in the land, the parties whose interest is at stake, employ eminent counsel, that the whole merits of the case may be developed, and conduce to a just decision. And the court will not suffer its attention to be withdrawn, or its judgment to be disturbed, by vilification of an opponent, or flattery of the tribunal, or the introduction of any other irrelevant matter, but rebukes them as a personal indignity. Now the people have questions to decide infinitely more important than are ever submitted to any court,—they may have the question of the court's existence to decide on,—and should not they, therefore, demand of all their advisers, whether elected or self-constituted, a corresponding truthfulness and gravity?

All philosophers are agreed in regard to all the great truths of astronomy, chemistry, engineering, mechanics, navigation;—if any new point arises, they address themselves most soberly and sedulously to its solution; if new instruments are wanted, they prepare them; if they are deficient in any collateral branch of information, they acquire it. And yet philosophy has no questions more difficult or important than those which are decided with us, by a major vote. Why then should we wonder that on all the great questions which, as yet, have arisen under our government,—the increase or reduction of the army and navy; peace or war; tariff or anti-tariff; internal improvements or no internal improvements; currency, bank or no bank, sub-treasury or no sub-treasury;—why should we wonder, that on all these and other vital questions, we should already have precedents and authorities on both sides, and every thing as yet unsettled;—nay even a wider diversity and a fiercer conflict of opinion, at the present time, than at the foundation of the government?

And while the present state of things exists, is it not obvious, that we can neither develop the principles of a true policy, nor enjoy the advantages of consistency even in an erroneous course? A foreigner would naturally inquire how it is, that, with such an extended country and with such predominating interests, our parties are so equally balanced,—and why it is, that power so often shifts hands amongst us, and rivals and competitors are now on this side and now on that, like partners in a country-dance. The answer is obvious. If any one party predominates, and triumphs even to the silencing of opposition,—not through any sagacity or sanity of its own, but owing to a deep under current of events which bears

it prosperously along, notwithstanding any follies or enormities which may be committed on the surface; it is easy to see that, in a country presenting such diversified interests as ours, and with knowledge so inadequate to a mastery of their relations, the defeated and dispersed party can rally under some new name, and avowing some new and plausible purpose, again contend for victory. And thus, in an ignorant community, the decomposition and recomposition of parties may follow each other forever. Or, suppose that each of two great parties contains a million of tried adherents,—of men who may be relied on, who will not, on the morning of battle, strike their flag and march over in a body, to the enemy's ranks;—but suppose that, in addition to this loyal million on each side, there are a hundred thousand mere mercenaries,—political Swiss, ready to fight on either side, and whose only inquiry is, which side offers greater pay and greater plunder;—is it not plain that every question will be decided by the hirelings? Foreseeing on what the fate of the day is to depend, will not each party,—at least its irresponsible members, if not its leaders,—be tempted to offer bounty and spoils,—to bid and over-bid for their services, until the venal Hessians are glutted. Is this prophecy, or is it history?

We look with a kind of contempt as well as abhorrence upon the self-styled republics of South America, which seem to be founded politically, as well as territorially, upon earthquakes. Were it not that so much of human happiness is involved in their revolutions, ridicule would overpower indignation at the spectacle they present. It is difficult to state the number of their overturns, and of late years, it has seemed hardly worth while to keep the tally, but probably the changes of party and of policy in our general government, have not been much less numerous than theirs. In some of our States certainly, the changes of party have been so frequent, that the Moon would be their most appropriate coat of arms.*

In one important particular, indeed, we have the advantage of our name-sakes in the Southern hemisphere; for our revolutions of party, as yet, have been bloodless. How long they may continue so, even in New England, depends upon the measures we take to give predominance to principle over passion, in the education of the young.

To these indisputable facts respecting the general ignorance of this country, it cannot be answered, that, stationed at different points, all over its surface, with narrow intervening distances, there are a few men, who have been bred in collegiate halls, educated in all the lore of civil polity, and trained to the labors of professional life, who will be eyes to the blind, and understandings to the foolish, and will lead the ignorant in the paths of wisdom. In the first place, suppose that irreconcilable differences should arise amongst these men;—can an ignorant and stupid people decide between them, with any certainty of not deciding in favor of the erroneous? And again; the history of the world shows an ever-present desire in mankind to acquire power and privilege, and to retain them, when acquired. Knowledge is power; and the race has suffered as much from the usurpers of knowledge, as from Alexanders or Napoleons. If learning could be monopolized by a few individuals amongst us, another priesthood, Egyptian or Druidical, would speedily arise, bowing the souls of men beneath the burden of their terrible superstitions; or, if learning were more widely spread, but still confined to a privileged order, the multitude, unable to comprehend the source of the advantages it conferred, and stimulated by envy and fear, would speedily extinguish whatever there might be of light,—just as the owl and the bat and the mole, if they were

* In the twenty-two elections for Governor of the State of New York, which have taken place since the adoption of the Federal Constitution in 1789, the average majority has been only a little more than twelve thousand; and, omitting the election of 1822, when the opposition was only nominal, the average majority has been less than seven thousand; while, according to the census, the number of whites in that State, over 20 years of age, unable to read and write, is more than 44,000. In Pennsylvania, the majority for Governor has varied from 3,000 to 25,000. It has 33,940 whites, over 20 years of age, unable to read and write. In Ohio, the majority has varied from 2,000 (in 1828, and 1830) to 14,000, (last year.) Its number of adult whites unable to read and write, is 35,394.

In the presidential election of 1836, Mr. Van Buren's majority over Harrison and White was 25,000,—South Carolina choosing her electors by the Legislature. At the very next election, (1840,) the majority, on the opposite side, was 146,000.

promoted to the government of the solar system, would extinguish the sun, because its beams arrested their hunt for insects and vermin. No! The whole people must be instructed in the knowledge of their duties, they must be elevated to a contemplation and comprehension of those great truths on which alone a government like ours can be successfully conducted; and any hope of arresting degeneracy, or suppressing the insurgent passions of the multitude by the influence of here and there an individual, though he were wise as Solon or Solomon, would prove as fallacious as an attempt to stop the influx of malaria, by sprinkling a little chloride of lime along the creeks and shallows of the shore, if the whole ocean, in all its depths, were corrupted.

Bear with me, Fellow-Citizens, while I say, I rejoice that this emergency has burst upon us. I rejoice that power has passed irrevocably into the hands of the people, although I know it has brought imminent peril upon all public and private interests, and placed what is common and what is sacred alike in jeopardy. Century after century, mankind had groaned beneath unutterable oppressions. To pamper a few with luxuries, races had been subjected to bondage. To satiate the ambition of a tyrant, nations had been dashed against each other in battle, and millions crushed by the shock. The upward-tending, light-seeking capacities of the soul had been turned downwards into darkness and debasement. All the realms of futurity, which the far-seeing eye of the mind could penetrate, had been peopled with the spectres of superstition. The spirits of the infernal world had been subsidized, to bind all religious freedom, whether of thought or of speech, in the bondage of fear. Heaven had been sold, for money, like an earthly domicile, by those who, least of all, had any title to its mansions. In this exigency, it was the expedient of Providence, to transfer dominion from the few to the many,—from those who had abused it, to those who had suffered. The wealthy, the high-born, the privileged, had had it in their power to bless the people; but they had cursed them. Now, they and all their fortunes are in the hands of the people. The poverty which they have entailed is to command their opulence. The ignorance they have suffered to abound, is to adjudicate upon their rights. The appetites they have neglected, or which they have stimulated for their own indulgence, are to invade the sanctuary of their homes. In fine, that interest and concern for the welfare of inferiors, which should have sprung from motives of philanthropy, must now be extorted from motives of self-preservation. As famine teaches mankind to be industrious and provident, so do these great developments teach the more favored classes of society that they never can be safe while they neglect the welfare of any portion of their social inferiors. In a broad survey of the grand economy of Providence, the lesson of frugality and thrift, which is taught by the dearth of a single year, is no plainer than this grander lesson of universal benevolence, which the lapse of centuries has been evolving, and is now inculcating upon the world.

Yes, Fellow-Citizens, it is the sublimest truth which the history of the race has yet brought to light, that God has so woven the fortunes of all men into one inseparable bond of unity and fellowship, that it can be well with no class, or oligarchy, or denomination of men, who, in their own self-seeking, forget the welfare of their fellow-beings. Nature has so bound us together by the ties of brotherhood, by the endearments of sympathy and benevolence, that the doing of good to others opens deep and perennial well-springs of joy in the human soul; but if we will select the coarse gratifications of selfishness,—if we will forget our own kindred blood in whosoever veins it may flow, then the Eternal Laws denounce, and will execute upon us, tribulation and anguish, and a fearful looking for of an earthly, as well as of a heavenly judgment.

In the first place, there is the property of the affluent, which lies outspread, diffused, scattered over land and sea,—open alike to the stealthiness of the thief, the violence of the robber, and the torch of the incendiary. If any think they hold their estates by a surer tenure,—by charters, franchises, or other muniments of property; let them know that all these, while the ballot-box which controls legislation, and the jury-box and the witnesses' stand, which control the tribunals of

justice, are open ;—all these are but as iron mail to protect them against lightning. Where is their security against breaches of trust, and fraudulent bankruptcies,—against stop-laws and suspension-acts, or the bolder measures of legislative repudiation? If their ultimate hope is in the protection of the laws, what shall save them, when fraud and perjury turn every legal remedy into a new instrument of aggression? And behind all these, there is an omnipotent *corps de reserve* of physical force, which mocks at the slowness of legislation and judicature,—whose decrees are irreversible deeds,—whose terrific decisions flash forth in fire, or burst out in demolition.

But houses, lands, granaries, flocks, factories, warehouses, ships, banks, are only exterior possessions,—the out-works of individual ownership. When these are carried, the assault will be made upon personal security, character and life ; and, lastly, upon all the endearments and sanctities that cluster around the domestic altar,—and when these are lost, humanity has nothing more to lose.

Look at England : and is she not, at the present moment, teaching a lesson too instructive to be lost upon us? There, a landed aristocracy, by extortious rents and class-legislation, have turned every *twelfth* subject into a pauper. They have improved soils ; but they have forgotten the cultivator himself,—as though the clod of the valley were worth more than the soul of the tiller. The terms offered by manufacturing capitalists, with a few most worthy exceptions, have been, absolute starvation, or work with the lowest life-sustaining pittance. Manufacturers have been most anxious about tariff laws, which merely regulate the balance of trade ; but heedless of those moral laws, which determine the balance of all power in the last resort. They have been alive to all improvements in machinery, but dead to the character of the operatives who were to work it. Surely there is no such danger of spontaneous combustion in a heap of oiled cotton or wool, as there is in a mass of human ignorance and prejudice ; nor can the former be so easily set on fire by a torch, as the latter by a demagogue. For years past the upper house of parliament have perseveringly and successfully resisted all measures for National Education, which they could not pervert from the bestowment of equal benefits upon all, to the support of their own monopolies. And, as a legitimate consequence of all these systematic, wholesale infractions of the great law which teaches us to do unto others as we would that they should do unto us, there are now, to-day, three millions of Chartists thundering at their palace gates, and the motto upon their banner is, “ Bread or Blood.”

What Paley so justly said of a parent, that “ to send an uneducated child into the world is little better than to turn out a mad dog or a wild beast into the streets,” is just as true when applied to parliament and hierarchy, as when applied to an individual.*

* For a century past, a vast portion of the wit of all English novel and dramatic literature has turned upon the ignorance and coarseness of the common people. The millions have first been shut out from the means of knowledge and good breeding, and then their cockneyisms, their provincial, outlandish pronunciation and brogue, their personal awkwardness and half-formed ideas, have been ridiculed and laughed at, by those who could afford to buy gilt-covered books, and go to Drury Lane and Covent Garden. This double injustice of withholding knowledge and good manners, and then making sport of ignorance and clownishness, has been so long pursued that some of its natural consequences are fast developing. The ignorant and debased, knowing nothing of the gratifications of intelligence and refinement, have invented a few modes of fun and merrymaking, peculiar to themselves ;—such as the burning of cornstacks and hay-ricks, and the sprinkling of vitriol on magnificent dresses. Being disqualified for the use, and debarred from the dignity of the ballot-box, they betake themselves to the tinder-box. The light of blazing granaries serves them instead of brilliant ideas. In the malice of their misery, they love company too well not to reduce the diamond-studded robes of lords and prelates, to the value of their own beggarly rags. And is there not a close resemblance between these pastimes of the “ high” and the “ low?” An educated nobleman regales himself at the theatre, or in his palace, with a farce or novel, where the uncouth language and awkward manners of the poor and the neglected are made ridiculous ; and, as he alights from, or re-enters his emblazoned carriage, a dexterous villain *pinks* a thousand eyelet holes through his dress of ermine, or cloth of gold, by the skilfully sprinkled contents of a vitriol bottle. The one enjoys a farce in *three* acts ; the other, in *one* act. The *wit* in both instances must consist in the *incongruity* ; and, as to the *humanity* of the sports, the latter seems every whit as legitimate a source of amusement as the former ; or, to speak *phrenologically*, the pleasure, in both cases, is felt in the same part of the head. To a benevolent and Christian mind, how unutterably shocking are the extremes of such a state of society ; and what terrible retributions follow in the train of selfish legislation !

But if such is the present difference between the great interests which, in this country, we have in charge, and the intelligence that superintends those interests; what is our prospect in regard to the future? I speak not of the remote future, but of that which is now opening upon our view, and which the middle-aged man may live to see. Is time sweeping us forward to a better, or to a worse condition? The answer to this depends upon the extent and the efficiency of the means now employed to educate the rising generation. Let us quicken our resolutions, or calm our fears, by looking, for one moment, at the facts of the case.

The free population of the United States in 1840, was 14,581,553. It is found that about one fourth part of our population are between the ages of four and sixteen years. In Massachusetts it is so almost without a fraction.* Although there may be slight variations from this ratio in other States, yet undoubtedly the number *four* is an integer, by far nearer than any other that could be taken, which, when compared with unity or one, would show the ratio between the whole population of the United States, and the number of children within them, between the ages of four and sixteen years.

Now one fourth part of the whole population, is 3,645,368, while the whole number of children of *all ages*, in the Primary and Common Schools of the Union, is only 1,845,244, which would leave 1,800,144, or almost half the children of *an age to attend school*, and far more than half the whole number, *between four and sixteen years of age*, without any of the advantages which those schools might afford.†

Nor would the result be materially altered, even should we add all the students of those institutions, called academies and grammar schools, as contradistinguished from Primary and Common Schools; for they amount, in all, only to 164,159. The difference between four and sixteen, being twelve, if we divide the number of those who neither attend any academy, grammar, common, or primary school, by twelve, it will give a quotient of 136,332 persons who belong to this uneducated class, and who are annually passing the line of majority, and coming upon the stage of life, to be the fathers and the mothers of the next generation, the depositaries of all we hold dear,—in fine, to be the electors, *or the elected*, for all our magistracy. This class alone will annually furnish a number of voters, far greater than the average popular majority by which our presidents have been chosen. And even this statement, fearfully large as it is, does not include those foreigners who are coming, thousands every week, to mingle with our people, and very soon to take part in the choice of all our officers.

It was the observation of one of the most philosophical foreigners who has ever visited this country, (George Combe, Esq.,) that probably a majority of all the voters in the United States, were under thirty-five or thirty-six years of age. I think an examination of the last census would verify this remark. It would require then but fourteen years,—or three and a half presidential terms,—a period almost identical with that which has elapsed, since the election of Gen. Jackson,—to bring forward a numerical majority of voters who have never possessed either the intellectual or the moral advantages of a school;—and to whom the interior of a schoolroom would be as novel an object as the interior of an Egyptian pyramid, and the books and apparatus of the formèr as unintelligible as the hieroglyphics of the latter. Indeed, why are not the political destinies of the country already in such hands? This class, from their profound ignorance, will necessarily be incapable of discerning principles, or of appreciating arguments;—accessible through the passions alone; creating demagogues for leaders, and then destroying them, just as naturally as a barbarian makes an idol of a stock, or a serpent, and then hews it down, or kills it, when it does not answer his ridiculous or selfish prayers. Nor will this class of men necessarily attach themselves to any one party; but they will be, like the shifting ballast of a vessel, always on the wrong side.

* Whole population, 737,699;—Number between 4 and 16, (omitting three small towns,) 164,392. Now $164,392 \times 4 = 737,568$. So far as there is any difference, the proportion of children to adults would be greatest in the new States.

† There is of course, some *domestic* education. But this exists, but seldom, excepting in favor of those children who *also* go to school, and are therefore included in the above computation.

I have spoken only of that half of our rising population,—our future rulers,—who, from infancy to manhood, are rarely in any school of any kind. But, in no house for education is there any charm or magic, of such transforming power, as to turn an ignorant child into a capable citizen. What is the house; what the course of study and the appliances; who the teacher, and how long the attendance; become here significant questions. In regard to the moiety who, at some period of their minority, may be found in the schoolroom, look at the edifices where they assemble, which must have been first called *Temples of Science* by some bitter ironist; consider their meager outfit of books and apparatus; reflect upon the strong tendency, in all uneducated quarters, to keep a show-school, instead of a useful one; and think, for a moment, of the character of a portion, at least, of the teachers, whose only evidence of competency is, that nothing has been made in vain, and that they have failed in every thing before undertaken. It is by force of these adverse circumstances, that even in Massachusetts, although the compensation is far higher than in any other State in the Union, yet so niggardly are many teachers paid, and so little sympathy and social consideration do they receive, that young men, not unfrequently, desert the occupation of school-keeping and resort to our cities to let themselves out as servants in kitchens, or as grooms in stables;—well knowing that a kitchen, as destitute of apparatus as our common schoolrooms, is a thing unheard of, even in an alms-house; and that, if they keep their horses sleek and nimble, they will be better rewarded than if they “trained up children in the way they should go.” Female teachers, too, abandon the schoolroom for the factory, for they have learned that a spinning-fraine, or a power-loom, has no mother to abuse and defame them for making it work as it ought to work. And in those parts of the country where there are no Public Schools, but where a few of the wealthy procure their own teachers, how often are the private tutors and governesses treated as mere upper servants in the family, or even made the scape-goat for a child’s offences;—as, in former times, it is said to have been the practice in England, when the king’s son was sent to school, to send another boy with him as his companion, whose vicarious duty it was to receive all the flagellations due to the misdemeanors of his royal school-fellow.

In looking at the last census of the United States, one might infer that, at least, something adequate to the exigencies of the times, had been done, in the higher departments of education. The census shows a list of one hundred and seventy-three universities or colleges, with more than sixteen thousand students. I rejoice in the existence of any institutions for the increase of knowledge among the people; but the honor of education is rather tarnished than brightened, by giving a President and Faculty, instead of a prudential committee man, to a district school, and then calling it a college. The census gives to Massachusetts but *four* colleges, with 769 students. What, then, are we to think of the *twelve* colleges, set down to Maryland, (with less than three-sevenths of our free white population, and with almost twelve thousand over the age of 20, unable to read and write,) with 813 students;—of the *thirteen* colleges, set down to Virginia, with 1,097 students; of the *ten*, in Kentucky, with 1,419 students; and of the *eighteen* in Ohio, with 1,717 students. Some of these colleges or universities, at the West and South, I know are well conducted, and embrace a competent range of studies; but whoever has visited many of the institutions bearing these high-sounding names, inquired into their course of studies, marked the ages of the students, and seen the juvenile alumni, well knows, that the amount of instruction there given bears no greater proportion to what a liberal college course of studies should be, than the narrow circuit of a mill-horse, to the vast circumference of the Hippodrome.

And what are we doing, as a people, to supply these great deficiencies? What intellectual lights are we kindling to repel the night of ignorance, whose coming on will bring, not only darkness, but chaos?

There is not a single State in this whole Union, which is doing anything at all proportionate to the exigency of the case. The most that can be said is, that there are three States out of the twenty-six, which have adopted some commendable measures for the promotion of this great work. These are Massachusetts, New

York and Michigan,—the first by sustaining her Board of Education, by her Normal Schools, and her District School Libraries; the second by her District School Libraries, her fund, and her county superintendents of schools; and the third, by her magnificent fund, and her State superintendency of education. Five years ago, Ohio entered upon the work, but after about two years, the measure was substantially abandoned. Four years ago, a new system was established in Connecticut, which was most efficiently and beneficially administered, under the auspices of one of the ablest and best of men, (Henry Barnard, 2d, Esq. ;) but it is with unspeakable regret I am compelled to add, that within the last month, all her measures for improvement have been swept from the statute-book. New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Kentucky may be mentioned as exhibiting signs of life on this subject, although it is a life which far more nearly resembles the imitative and feeble movements of infancy, than the independent and conscious energy of manhood.

In but few of the other States, can even a well digested system for the organization of schools be found in the statute-book; and in most of them, the meager provisions upon the subject seem to have been inserted, only as a sort of ornamental legislation, and are disregarded or obsolete. And, what is most painful and humiliating to reflect upon, in all the principal slave States,—Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, and so forth,—the highest homage which is paid to the beneficent power of education, is the terrible homage of making it a severely punishable offence, to educate a slave!

Now, even within the narrow horizon of the politician, what is the result of this neglect of childhood, and the consequent ignorance of men? When an election is coming on, whether State or National, then the rival parties begin to play their game for the ignorant, and to purchase the saleable. Mass-meetings are held. Hired speakers itinerate through the country. A thousand tireless presses are plied, day and night. Newspapers and pamphlets are scattered thick as snow-flakes in a wintry storm. Reading-rooms and committee-rooms are opened, and men abandon business and family to fill them. The census is taken anew, and every man is labelled or ear-marked. As the contest approaches, fraud, intimidation, bribes, are rife. Immense sums are spent to carry the lame, to hunt up the skulking, to force the indifferent to the polls. Taxes are contributed, to qualify voters, and men are transported, at party expense, from one State to another. Couriers are despatched from county to county, or from State to State, to revive the desponding with false news of success. And after all this, even if a party chances to succeed in its choice of men, what security has it, for the fulfilment of any of its plans? Death may intervene. A "unit" cabinet may explode, and be scattered into many fragments. A party cemented together by no principle of moral cohesion, and founded upon no well-settled convictions of the intellect, may be broken in pieces, like the image of Nebuchadnezzar. Ten thousand retainers of the camp, who followed it only through hope of plundering the dead, will scent other spoils in another camp, when that hope is extinguished; and thus all the toil that was endured, and the expenditures and sacrifices that were made, will be lost.

For the last ten years, such have been the disastrous fluctuations of our National and State policy, on the single subject of the currency, that all the prodigality of nature, pouring her hundreds of millions of products, annually, into our hands, has not been able to save thousands and thousands of our people from poverty; and in many cases, economy, industry and virtue could not rescue their possessor from want. And why? I answer, as one reason, because this question has been decided, again and again, by voters who could not read and write,—by voters whom the simplest proposition in political economy, or in national finance, is as to unintelligible as a book of Hebrew or Greek. Should such men vote right, *at any one time*, it would be for a wrong reason; and the favorable chances being exhausted, they may be relied upon to vote wrong ever afterwards. Hence, under one administration, we have had a bank, under another, a sub-treasury, and the third may be commended to the benefit of its own bankrupt law.

During all this time, the course of our government, on this and other great questions of policy, has been vacillating,—enacting and repealing, advancing and receding, baffling all the plans of the wisest;—instead of imitating in some good degree, as it should do, the steadiness and force of the Divine administration.

And who are they who have suffered most under these changes which so nearly resemble anarchy? Whose property has been dissipated? Whose enterprises have been baffled? Are they not mostly those who have been, not merely neglectful, but disdainful, of the Common Schools? who have given whatever wealth they had to give, to public libraries, to colleges, and the higher seminaries of learning? who have separated their children from the mass, and gathered them into class, and clan, and sectarian schools of their own? who have opposed legislative grants and municipal taxation; and who, for their whole lives, have never countenanced, patronized, or even visited the Common School, from which their own rulers were so soon to emerge? What a remarkable fact it is in the history of this Commonwealth, that amongst all the splendid donations,—amounting in the whole to many millions of dollars,—which have been made to colleges and academies, and to theological institutions for the purpose of upholding the doctrines of some particular sect;—only one man, embracing the *whole* of the rising generation in his philanthropic plan, and acting with a high and enlightened disregard of all local, partisan, and sectarian views, has given any considerable sum to promote the prosperity of Common Schools! (Hon. Edmund Dwight.)

And this series of disasters, under which we are suffering, must lengthen to an interminable train; those anxieties which the wealthy and the educated now feel for their purse, they must soon feel for their characters, their persons, and their families; the whole country must be involved in wider, and deeper calamities, until a more noble and Christian policy is pursued. All the newspapers that steam power can print, during the most protracted political canvass, will be no equivalent for the single book in which a child learns to read. One mind trained to thought and investigation, upon the forms of the schoolroom, will arrive at sounder truths than can ever be impressed upon it by a hired political missionary. If we would have better times, the available school teacher must be sought for, as anxiously as the available candidate for office; and efforts as energetic must be made to bring children into the schools, as are now made to bring voters to the polls. If we would have better times, we need not honor or reward the *writers* of our past history,—Sparks, Bancroft, Irving,—less; but we must honor and reward the *makers* of our future history,—the school teachers,—more.

But I have labored to supererogation, to show both an existing and a prospective deficiency in knowledge, for managing the vast and precious interests of this great nation. I have shown,—if not an incurable, yet unless cured,—a fatal malady in the head; I must now exhibit a not less fatal malady in the heart. I tremble at the catalogue of national crimes which we are exhibiting before heaven and earth! The party rancor and vilification which rages through our newspaper press,—in utter forgetfulness or contempt of the great spiritual law, that when men pass from judgment to passion, they will soon pass from passion to violence! The fraud, falsehood, bribery, perjury, perpetrated at our elections; and the spirit of wantonness or malice,—of pride or envy, in which the sacred privilege of voting is exercised! The practice of double voting, like parricide in Rome, unheard of in the early days of the Republic, is becoming more and more frequent. Although, in some of the States, a property qualification, and in some even a landed qualification is necessary; yet the number of votes given at the last presidential election, equalled, almost without a fraction, one-sixth part of the whole free population in the Union. In one of the States the number of votes exceeded, by a large fraction, one-fifth of the whole population,—men, women, and children. Will it not be a new form of a Republic,—unknown alike to ancient or modern writers; when the question shall be,—not how many voters there are, but how many ballots can be printed and put surreptitiously into the ballot-box? Then, there is the fraudulent sequestration of votes, by the returning officers, because the majority is adverse to their own favorite candidates,—which has now been done, on a

large scale, in three of the principal States in the Union! The scenes of violence enacted, not only *without*, but *within* the Capitol of the nation; and the halls, which should be consecrated to order, and solemnity, and a devout consultation upon the unspeakable magnitude and value of the interests of this great people, desecrated by outrage, and Bilingsgate, and drunken brawls! Challenges given, and duels fought by members of Congress, in violation, or evasion, of their own lately enacted law against them; and within the space of a few days, a proud and prominent member, from a proud and prominent State,—the countryman of Washington, and Jefferson, and Madison, put under bonds to *keep the peace*, like a wild, fresh-landed Carib. In two of our legislative assemblies, one member has been murdered by another member, in open day, and during the hours of session;—in one of the cases, the deed being perpetrated by the presiding officer of the assembly, who descended from his chair, and pierced the heart of his victim with a bowie knife,—and still goes unpunished though not unhonored. What outbreaks of violence all over the country;—the lynching of five men, at one time, at Vicksburg;—the valley of the Mississippi, from St. Louis to New Orleans, lighted almost as with watch fires, by the burning of human beings;—the riots and demolitions, at New York, at Philadelphia, at Baltimore, at Alton, at Cincinnati;—yes, and the spectacle of our own more serene part of the heavens, crimsoned at midnight, by a conflagration of the dwelling-place of women and female children,—a deed incited and brutally executed, through prejudice, and hostility towards a sect which takes the liberty to protest against Protestants, as Protestants protested against them!

And, in addition to this barbarian force and lawlessness, are not the business relations of the community contaminated, more and more, with speculation and knavery? In mercantile honor and honesty, in the intercourse between buyer and seller, is there not a laxation of all the joints of the body commercial and social? The number of fraudulent bankruptcies,—fraudulent in the incurring of the debts, if not in the surrender of the assets;—the rapacity of speculation; the breaches of private trust; the embezzlement of corporate funds; the abscondings with government property; the malversations of government fiduciaries, whether of a United States Bank, or of a Girard College; the repudiation of State debts;—and that other class of offences which combines the criminality both of fraud and force,—such as the shooting of a sheriff, who attempted to execute civil process,—or the burning of a bank with all its contents, by a company of debtors, in Mississippi, because their notes had been lodged in it for collection!

I trust the fact will not fail to be observed, and the motive to be appreciated, that, from this terrific array of enormities I have omitted one entire class of events;—a class which may be thought by some more ominous of ill than any I have enumerated. I refer to such facts as the late commotions in Rhode Island ensuing upon the long-delayed extension of suffrage;—the legislative declaration already made in two of the States, of an intention to disregard the apportionment law, recently passed by the general government;—the admission to a seat, in the House of Representatives of the last Congress, of the claimants from New Jersey, against the credentials of the State authorities;—the refusal of one branch of the Tennessee Legislature to elect Senators to fill vacancies in the Senate of the United States;—the admission into the Union of Territories which had exercised, by assumption, the right of forming a constitution for themselves, without any authority from the general government, or any law prescribing the mode in which it should be done;—the armed “nullification” of South Carolina, &c. &c. I omit all this class of cases from the catalogue, because they are, at present, implicated with strong party feelings, on one side or the other; and it is my intention, on this day, to touch no party chord;—to bring forward nothing, either of fact or of principle, which the candid men of all parties shall not acknowledge to be a compulsive reason for immediate measures of reform.

Let us look at another aspect of this case. The number of convicts at present in confinement, in the penitentiaries, and State prisons of the Union, is very nearly four thousand seven hundred and fifty; and the average duration of their

imprisonment is about four years. The number under sentence *for crime*, in common jails, and houses of correction, is not less than the preceding, and the average length of their imprisonment is estimated at six months. Suppose that these culprits live, on an average, but eight years after their enlargement; and we have the appalling number of *eighty-five thousand five hundred* convicted criminals,—proved offenders against the laws of God and man,—almost universally adults,—at large, mingling in our society, and a very large portion of them competent to vote;—there being but three States in all this Union, where, by the constitution of the State, a conviction for felony, or any infamous offence, works a forfeiture of the elective franchise. Yes! *voters, good and true*,—for the wrong side, and to send you and me to perdition! And I do not believe there is one State in the Union, whose elections for Governor and other high officers, have not, sometimes, been so nearly a drawn game, that its quota of this felon host, its own battalion of sin, would not have been able to decide them, by what a politician would call, a very respectable majority!

I have somewhere seen the number of atheists, of Abner Kneeland's men, in the United States, stated fearfully high; but upon what authority, or after what extent and accuracy of investigation, I am not able to say. These are all *men*,—if not all *voters*; for, thank Heaven, the female heart is untenable by atheism. But a fact, far more important than the number of *theoretical* atheists, is the number of *practical* atheists,—of those who live without God in the world, who have neither faith nor practice, respecting the existence, the immutability, and the inevitable execution of the Divine Laws. I say the number of *practical* atheists is the question of greater importance; for who can live in this world and mingle with its people, and not be more and more deeply impressed, day by day, with the divine wisdom of the criterion, "By their fruits ye shall know them?" Actions are fruits, while pharisaical professions are only gilded signs or placards, hung upon thistles or thornbushes, saying, "Ho, all ye; *we* bear figs and grapes!"

In this review, I pass by those combinations of ignorance and false teaching, which lead to Mormonism, and Millerism, and Perfectionism. I pass by that reckless and flagitious spirit, which, on the Canadian border, lately came so near to involving us in a conflict with the most powerful nation on earth. I pass by our treatment of the aborigines. I pass by such an event as the Florida war, which has already cost this nation more than thirty millions of dollars; and which, as is now notorious, was instigated by desperadoes, because it promised to prove for them, as it has proved, a more lucrative business than other modes of swindling or depredation.

With irrepressible, but unspeakable joy, I pass by the hundreds of thousands of inebriates, who, so lately, lay weltering upon the sea of Intemperance; yet who, periodically, were *rafted up*, by political partisans,—as men raft up float-wood,—to drop their foul votes into the ballot-box, and elect the rulers of a self-called free and Christian people;—these do I gladly pass by, for the waters of that deluge are subsiding; and already thousands and ten thousands, yea, more than ten times ten thousand, have found an Ararat on the *Terra Firma* of Abstinence.

Fellow-Citizens, from this glimpse,—this mere bird's-eye view,—of our intellectual and moral condition, I do not hesitate to affirm, that our republican edifice, at this time,—in present fact and truth,—is not sustained by those columns of solid and ever-enduring adamant,—intelligence and virtue. Its various parts are only just clinging together by that remarkable cohesion,—that mutual bearing and support, which unsound portions of a structure may impart to each other; and which, as every mechanic well knows, will, for a time, hold the rotten materials of an edifice together, although not one of its timbers could support its own weight;—and unless, therefore, a new substructure can be placed beneath every buttress and angle of this boasted Temple of Liberty, it will soon totter and fall, and bury all in-dwellers in its ruins.

And what, I again ask, are we doing, to impart soundness and permanency to that which we profess so much to value and admire? We all bear witness that there is but one salvation for the State,—*the knowledge of duty and the will to do it*, among the people. But what measures are we taking, to cause that knowledge

to spring up, like a new intellectual creation, in every mind; and to cause that will to be quickened into life, in every breast? We all agree,—the universal experience and history of mankind being our authority,—that, in nineteen cases out of every twenty, if the human mind ever is to be expanded by knowledge and imbued with virtuous principles, it must be done during the susceptible years of childhood and youth. But when we come to the *sine qua non*,—to the *work*,—to the point where volition must issue forth into action, or it is valueless;—when we come to the taxing, to the building, to the books, to the apparatus, to the whole system of preparatory and contemporaneous measures for carrying on, and perfecting the work of education;—where wishes and sympathy and verbal encouragement are nothing without the effective co-operation of those muscles which perform labor and transfer money;—when we come to this point, then excuses teem, and the well-wishers retire from the stage, like actors at the close of a drama. I gladly acknowledge that there are honorable exceptions, in all ranks and classes of men; and in no State in the Union, are there so many of these exceptions, as in Massachusetts; and yet even here, is it not most extensively true, that when we appeal to the different classes and occupations of men, we meet with indifference, if not with repulse? We solicit the farmer to visit the school, but he is too much engaged with the care of his stock, to look after his children. We apply to the tradesman, but his account of profit and loss must be adjusted before he can attend to the source of all profit and loss, in the mind. We call upon the physician, but he has too many patients in the arms of death, to allow him one hour for arresting the spread of a contagion by which, if neglected, hundreds of others must perish. We apply to the lawyer and the judge, but they are redressing the wrongs and avenging the violated laws of society,—they are so engaged in uncoiling the folds of a parent serpent which has wound itself round the State, that they cannot stop to crush a hundred of its young, ere they issue from the nest, to wind their folds alike around the State, and the law, and its ministers. We apply to the clergyman; he bids us God speed,—but commends us for assistance, to the first man we meet; for he and his flock are beleaguered by seven evil spirits, in the form of seven heresies,—each fatal to the souls of men. We sally forth from his doors, and the first man we meet is his clerical brother; but he, too, has seven fatal heresies to combat, and he solemnly assures us that the most dangerous leader of them all, is the man we have just left. We apply to the wealthy and the benevolent, who are carrying on vast religious enterprises abroad; but they have just shipped their cargoes of gold to Africa, to Asia, and to the uttermost isles of the sea, and can spare nothing;—never asking themselves the question, who, *in the next generation*, will support the enterprises they have begun, and retain the foothold they may acquire, if they suffer heathenism, and the idolatry of worshipping base passions, to spring up in their native land, and around their own doors. We go to those great antagonist, theological institutions, which have selected high social eminences, all over the land, and entrenched themselves against each other, as warring generals fortify their camps upon the summit of confronting hills;—we implore them to send out one wise and mighty man to guide this great people through a wilderness more difficult to traverse than that which stretched between Egypt and Canaan; but each hostile sect is engaged in propagating a creed which it *knows* to be true, against the fatal delusions of those various and opposite creeds, which each of the other sects also *knows* to be true! Oh! when will men learn, that ever since the Saviour bowed his head upon the cross and said “It is finished,” there has been *truth* enough in the world, to make all men wise and holy and happy. All that is wanted,—all that ever has been wanted, is,—minds that will appreciate truth. The barbarian cannot appreciate it, whether born in New Zealand, or in New England. The benighted and brutified child, whose thoughts are born of prejudice, whose actions of sensualism; whose moral sensibilities have been daily seared, from his birth, with the hot iron of vicious customs and maxims, cannot discern truth, cannot know it, will not embrace it, whether his father is called a savage or a Christian. If we say that the conceptions and desires of such minds are a transcript of Divine truth, what do we affirm the origi-

nal to be! No! Two different elements are essential to the existence of truth in the soul of man;—first, the essence, or prototype of truth, as it exists in the Divine Intelligence; and secondly, a human soul, sufficiently enlightened by knowledge to conceive it, sufficiently exercised in judgment to understand it, and sufficiently free from evil to love it. The latter are every whit as essential as the former. The human mind must be so enlarged that truth can enter it, and so free from selfishness, from pride, and intolerance, that truth may be its constant and welcome resident. To give truth a passport to the souls of men,—to ensure it home and supremacy in the human heart, there must be some previous awakening and culture of the intellectual and moral nature. In this respect, it is with spiritual, as with scientific truth. The great astronomical truths which pertain to the solar system, have existed ever since the creation;—for generations past, they have been known to the learned;—and all the planets, as they move, are heralds and torch-bearers, sent round by the hand of God, revolution after revolution, and age after age, to make perpetual proclamation through all their circuits, and to light up the heavens, from side to side, with ocular and refulgent demonstration of their existence; and yet, until their elements are all laboriously taught, until our minds are opened, and made capacious for their reception, these glorious truths are a blank, and for our vision and joy, might as well never have been. And so of all truth;—there must be a mind enlarged, ennobled, purified, to embrace truth, in all its beauty, sublimity and holiness, as well as beautiful, sublime and holy truths to be embraced. Until this is so, truth will be a light shining in darkness, and the darkness comprehending it not. But when this shall come to pass, then the awakened soul will exclaim with Jacob, “surely the Lord was in this place, and I knew it not.” Yet,—alike in all lands and for centuries past,—ninety-nine hundredths of all human efforts and expenditures have been devoted to force, upon the successive generations of the young, some special system, which happened in the particular age, to be in the ascendant; and which, in its turn, had been prejudicated by fallible men, to be infallibly true;—while scarcely any thing has been done to kindle the love of truth in the human breast, and to train the intellect to strength and impartiality in all investigations after it.

Fellow-Citizens, there is one strongly developed tendency in our political affairs which I cannot pass by, on an occasion like this, without an admonitory word. Though less obvious, yet it is of more evil portent, than any in the dark catalogue I have exhibited. It leads by swift steps to proximate ruin. I refer to the practice of the different political parties, into which we are unhappily divided, of seizing upon some specious aspect of every event, giving it an exaggerated and factitious importance, and perverting it to factious profit. In common and expressive phrase, this is called *making political capital* out of a thing; and the art of making this *capital* seems now to be incorporated into the regular tactics of party leaders. But it is forged capital, and in the end, it must bring forger and accomplices to judgment and condemnation, as well as all their dupes to political and moral insolvency. In law, such practices, or rather mal-practices, are called *chicanery*; and they justly subject to infamy, the practitioner who is corrupted with them. But law deals with private interests,—politics with the vaster interests of the whole community. And why should not the trick and knavery which strike a man's name from the roll of the court, strike it also from the red-book of the nation! Look at it, Fellow-Citizens;—a great question arises in the Legislative Halls of the State or Nation, or springs up in any part of our country; and immediately the party leaders and the party press reflect before the eyes of all the people,—not segments or fragments, even,—but distorted and discolored images of all the truths, facts and principles, pertaining to that question,—so distorted and discolored that no impartiality or patience can reproduce any likeness to the original. So extensive has this practice become, that an honest inquirer into the merits of men or measures, in reading accounts of the same individuals or transactions, in the rival newspapers of the day, would suppose them to relate to wholly different men and different measures, were it not for the occasional identity of the proper names which are used. Must it not follow that the vast majority of the people will get mutilated and false

views; and come, habitually, to decide the real question by looking at the counterfeited, until the mind itself is as perverted as the lights which shine on it. Immense responsibilities attach here to all who influence public opinion, whether they sit in the presidential, or gubernatorial, or editorial chair. The habit of ascribing, to trivial and fleeting considerations, the prominence and inviolability of eternal laws; the habit of discarding at every political crisis, the great principles which lie under the whole length of existence, and are the only possible basis of our well-being, in order to gain some temporary end; the habit, at our oft-recurring elections, of risking all future consequences, to secure present success, is high treason against the sovereignty of truth, and must be the harbinger of a speedy destruction. We can conceive of no power in the universe, that could uphold its throne, under so fatal a policy.

I do not advert to this prominent feature of our times,—worthy of far more extended consideration,—in order that one party may look into the conduct of its adversaries, to find cause of accusation; but that each may look upon its own course, and in view of it, demand and effect a speedy amendment.

Fellow-Citizens, amidst the distractions which now rend the country, let me ask you, as sober and reflecting men, what remedy do you propose for the present? what security for the future? Evils are not avoided by closing our eyes against them;—and, in which direction do you look for hope, without confronting disappointment or despair? Will the great political and financial problems which now agitate the Union, ever be rightly solved and permanently adjusted, while they are submitted, year after year, to voters who cannot even read and write? Can any additional intelligence and integrity be expected in our rulers, without additional intelligence and integrity in the constituency that elects them? Complain of President or Congress as much as we will, they are the very men whom we, the people, have chosen. If the country is an active volcano of ignorance and guilt, why should not Congress be a crater for the outgushing of its lava? Will Providence interfere to rescue us by a miracle, while we are voluntarily pursuing a course, which would make a speedier interference, and a more stupendous miracle necessary for our subsequent rescue? How much of time, of talent, and of wealth, we are annually expending,—in Legislatures, in political conventions, through newspapers,—to gain adherents to one system of policy, or its opposite, to an old party or to a new one;—but how little to rear a people with minds capable of understanding systems of policy, when developed, and of discerning between the right and the wrong, in the parties which beset and would inveigle them. What honors and emoluments are showered upon successful politicians; what penury and obscurity are the portion of those who are moulding the character of a rising generation of sovereigns! And here let not the truth be forgotten, that the weightiest obligation to foster and perfect the work of education, lies upon those States which enjoy the most, and not upon those which suffer under the least; for to whomsoever much is given, of them shall much be required.

Let us suppose that we were now overtaken by some great crisis in our national affairs,—such as we have already seen, or may soon see,—let us suppose that, in the issue of some presidential contest, for instance, not only the public interests of the nation, but the private interests of thousands of individuals, should be adroitly implicated; and that preparations should be made, and a zeal excited, corresponding to the magnitude of the occasion. War impends. Commerce, manufactures, agriculture, are at stake, or in conflict. The profits of capital, and the wages of labor, have been made to antagonize. North and South are confronted. Rich and poor, high and low, radical and conservative, bigot and latitudinarian, are marshalled for the onset. The expectants of office,—suffering under a four, perhaps an eight years' famine, are rioting on anticipated spoils. The spume of other countries and the refuse of our own are coalescing, and some Catiline is springing to the head of every ruffian band. Excitement foams through all the veins of the body politic;—in some it is fever; in others delirium; and, under these auspices, or omens, the eventful day arrives.

It surely requires but little effort of the imagination to picture forth the leaders

of all the party-colored bands into which our country is divided, as at the head of their respective companies, and gathering them to a mightier assembly than ever met in Grecian Areopagus or Roman Comitia. Among the vast and motley-souled hosts, which such a day would summon together, I will direct your attention to but two grand divisions;—divisions, however, of this republican army, which would be first in the field, and most contentious for the victory. I mean the legionaries of Crime and those of Ignorance.

Behold, on this side, crowding to the polls, and even candidates for the highest offices in the gift of the people, are those whose hands are red with a brother's blood, slain in private quarrel! Close pressing upon these, urges onward a haughty band glittering in wealth,—but, for every flash that gleams from jewel and diamond, a father, a mother, and helpless children, have been stolen, and sold into ransomless bondage. Invading their ranks, struggles forward a troop of assassins, rioters, lynchers, incendiaries, who have hitherto escaped the retributions of law, and would now annihilate the law whose judgments they fear;—behind these, pours on, tumultuous, the chaotic rout of atheism;—and yonder dashes forward a sea of remorseless life,—thousands and ten thousands,—all felons, convicts, condemned by the laws of God and man. In all the dread catalogue of mortal sins, there is not one, but, in that host, there are hearts which have willed, and hands which have perpetrated it. The gallows has spared its victim, the prison has released its tenants,—from dark cells where malice had brooded, where incendiarism and lust had engendered their machinations, where revenge and robbery had held their nightly rehearsals, the leprous multitude is disgorged, and comes up to the ballot-box to fore-doom the destinies of this nation. In gazing at this multitudinous throng, who emerge from their hiding-places on the days of our elections,—all flagrant with crime and infamy,—would not every man exclaim, “I did not know, I could not have thought, that all the foul kennels and stews of earth; nay, nor all the gorged avenues of hell, could regurgitate upon the world, these legions of iniquity!”

But look, again, on the other side, at that deep and dense array of Ignorance, whose limits the eye cannot discover. Its van leans against us here, its rear is beyond the distant hills. They too, in this hour of their country's peril, have come up to turn the folly of which they are unconscious, into measures which they cannot understand, by votes which they cannot read. Nay more, and worse! for, from the ranks of crime, emissaries and bandit-leaders are sallying forth towards the ranks of ignorance, and hieing to and fro amongst them,—shouting the gibberish war-cries of faction, and flaunting banners with lying symbols, such as cheat the eye of a mindless brain,—and thus the hosts of crime are to lead on the hosts of ignorance, in their assault upon Liberty and Law!

What, now, shall be done to save the citadel of freedom, where are treasured all the hopes of posterity? Or, if we can survive the peril of such a day, what shall be done, to prevent the next generation from sending forth still more numerous hordes,—afflicted with deeper blindness and incited by darker depravity?

Are there any here, who would counsel us to save the people from themselves, by wresting from their hands this formidable right of ballot? Better for the man who would propose this remedy to an infuriate multitude, that he should stand in the lightning's path as it descends from heaven to earth. And, answer me this question; you! who would reconquer for the few, the power which has been won by the many; you! who would disfranchise the common mass of mankind, and recondemn them to become Helots, and bond-men, and feudal serfs;—tell me, were they again in the power of your castes, would you not again neglect them, again oppress them, again make them the slaves to your voluptuousness, and the panders or the victims of your vices? Tell me, you royalists and hierarchs, or advocates of royalty and hierarchy! were the poor and the ignorant again in your power, to be tasked and tithed at your pleasure, would you not turn another Ireland into paupers, and colonize another Botany Bay with criminals? Would you not brutalize the men of other provinces into the “*Dogs of Vendee*,” and debase the noble and refined nature of woman, in other cities, into the “*Poissardes of Paris*?”

O ! better, far better, that the atheist and the blasphemer, and he who since the last setting sun, has dyed his hands in parricide, or his soul in sacrilege, should challenge equal political power with the wisest and the best ;—better, that these blind Sampsons, in the wantonness of their gigantic strength, should tear down the pillars of the Republic, than that the great lesson which Heaven, for six thousand years, has been teaching to the world, should be lost upon it ;—the lesson that the intellectual and moral nature of man is the one thing precious in the sight of God ; and therefore, until this nature is cultivated, and enlightened, and purified, neither opulence nor power, nor learning nor genius, nor domestic sanctity, nor the holiness of God's altars, can ever be safe. Until the immortal and godlike capacities of every being that comes into the world are deemed more worthy, are watched more tenderly, than any other thing, no dynasty of men, or form of government, can stand, or shall stand, upon the face of the earth ; and the force or the fraud which would seek to uphold them, shall be but “ as fetters of flax to bind the flame.”

In all that company of felons and caitiffs, who prowl over the land, is there one man, who did not bring with him into life, the divine germ of conscience, a sensibility to right, and capacities which might have been nurtured and trained into the fear of God, and the love of man ? In all this company of ignorance, which, in its insane surgery, dissects eye and brain and heart, and maims every limb of the body politic, to find the disease, which honestly, though blindly, it wishes to cure ;—in all this company, is there one, who did not bring with him into life, noble faculties of thought,—capabilities of judgment, and prudence, and skill, that might have been cultivated into a knowledge, an appreciation, and a wise and loving guardianship, of all human interests and human rights ? The wickedness and blindness of the subject are the judgments of heaven for the neglect of the sovereign ; for, to this end and to no other, was superiority given to a few, and the souls of all men pre-adapted to pay spontaneous homage to strength and talent and exalted station, that through the benignant and attractive influence of their possessors, the whole race might be won to wisdom and virtue.

Let those, then, whose wealth is lost or jeopardized by fraud or misgovernment ; let those who quake with apprehension for the fate of all they hold dear ; let those who behold and lament the desecration of all that is holy ; let rulers whose counsels are perplexed, whose plans are baffled, whose laws defied or evaded ;—let them all know, that whatever ills they feel or fear, are but the just retributions of a righteous heaven for neglected childhood.

Remember, then, the child whose voice first lisps, to-day, before that voice shall whisper sedition in secret, or thunder treason at the head of an armed band. Remember the child whose hand, to-day, first lifts its tiny bauble, before that hand shall scatter fire-brands, arrows and death. Remember those sportive groups of youth in whose halcyon bosoms there sleeps an ocean, as yet scarcely ruffled by the passions, which soon shall heave it as with the tempest's strength. Remember, that whatever station in life you may fill, these mortals,—these immortals, are your care. Devote, expend, consecrate yourselves to the holy work of their improvement. Pour out light and truth, as God pours sunshine and rain. No longer seek knowledge as the luxury of a few, but dispense it amongst all as the bread of life. Learn only how the ignorant may learn ; how the innocent may be preserved ; the vicious reclaimed. Call down the astronomer from the skies ; call up the geologist from his subterranean explorations ; summon, if need be, the mightiest intellects from the Council Chamber of the nation ; enter cloistered halls, where the scholiast muses over superfluous annotations ; dissolve conclave and synod, where subtle polemics are vainly discussing their barren dogmas ;—collect whatever of talent, or erudition, or eloquence, or authority, the broad land can supply, *and go forth, AND TEACH THIS PEOPLE.* For, in the name of the living God, it must be proclaimed, that licentiousness shall be the liberty ; and violence and chicanery shall be the law ; and superstition and craft shall be the religion ; and the self-destructive indulgence of all sensual and unhallowed passions, shall be the only happiness of that people who neglect the education of their children.

WM. B. FOWLE AND N. CAPEN

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